

Ex libris Joan: Thacker

Christianity not Mystrious:

O R, A

TREATISE

Shewing,

That there is nothing in the

GOSPEL Contrary to

R E A S O N,

Nor **ABOVE** it:

And that no Christian Doctrine
can be properly call'd

A MYSTERY.

By **JOHN TOLAND.**

The Second Edition Enlarg'd.

*We need not desire a better Evidence that any Man is in the
wrong, than to hear him declare against Reason, and
thereby to acknowledge that Reason is against him. Arch-
bishop Tillotson.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for Sam. Buckley at the Dolphin
over against St. Dunstons Church in
Fleetstreet: **MDCXCVI.**

EX LIBRIS FOR THE

THE

THEATRE

GOSSIP

REASON

ABOVE

And that is the Christian's

A MYSTERY

BY

which is the

FOR

THE

1/2

THE
PREFACE.

I Believe all Men will readily allow, that none should speak with more Freedom and Assurance than he that defends or illustrates the Truth. But if we credit the History of former Time, or duly consider what passes in the present, we shall find none more backward to speak their Minds in publick than such as have Right on their side. Indeed the Goodness of their Cause and Design should fortify 'em, one would think, against all the Attacks of their Enemies: Nor are there wanting frequent Examples of Persons, who with unshaken Constancy suffer'd the

most disgraceful and violent things for love of the Truth. Yet if we make a just Computation, and take in the Primitive Martyrs with the Prophets and Apostles themselves, the profess'd Defenders of Truth, only for Truth's sake, will be found to be a small handful with respect to the numerous Partizans of Error.

And such is the deplorable Condition of our Age, that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine Matters, tho it be never so true and beneficial, if it but very slightly differs from what is receiv'd by any Party, or that is establish'd by Law; but he is either forc'd to keep perpetual Silence, or to propose his Sentiments to the World, by way of Paradox, under a borrow'd or fictitious Name. To mention the least part of the Inconveniences they expose themselves to, who
hav

The Preface.

V

have the Courage to act more above-board, is too melancholy a Theme, and visible enough to be lamented by all that are truly generous and vertuous.

The Pravity of most Mens Dispositions, and the Ambition of particular Persons makes this Matter seem less strange in Politick and Secular Affairs; and yet a Man may not only make new Discoveries and Improvements in Law or Physick, and in the other Arts and Sciences impunibly, but also for so doing be deservedly encourag'd and rewarded. But wonderful! That the sacred Name of Religion which sounds nothing but Sanctity, Peace, and Integrity, should be so universally abus'd to patronize Ambition, Impiety, and Contention! And that what is our highest Interest perfectly to understand, should (for Reasons afterwards to be laid open) both be maintain'd

tain'd to be obscure, and very industriously made so! Nay, it is come to this, that Truth meets no where with stronger Opposition, than from many of those that raise the loudest Cry about it, and would be taken for no less than the only Dispensers of the Favours and Oracles of Heaven. If any has the Firmness to touch the minutest thing that brings them Gain or Credit, he's presently pursu'd with the Hue and Cry of Heresy: And, if he values their Censures, compell'd to make honourable Amends; or if he proves contumacious, he falls a Sacrifice, at least in his Reputation, to their implacable Hatred.

Nor is he like, we may be sure, to receive fairer Quarter from the declar'd Antagonists of Religion, whose Principles, as they trample upon all Equity and Truth, so they oblige 'em to hate and molest the strenuous Assertors

The Preface.

vii

tors of these and all other *Vertues*. But of such depressing Considerations enough! Notwithstanding which, I have ventur'd to publish this Discourse, designing thereby to rectify, as much as I'm able, the narrow bigotted Tenets of the One, and the most impious Maxims of the Other.

No Atheist or Infidel of any kind can justly be angry with me for measuring Swords with them, and attacking them only with the Weapons they prescribe me. The true Christian can no more be offended when he finds me imploy Reason, not to enervate or perplex, but to confirm and elucidate Revelation; unless he is apprehensive I should render it too clear to my self, or too familiar to others, which are Absurdities no Body will own. I hope to make it appear, that the Use of Reason is not so dangerous in Religion as it is commonly

represented, and that too by such as mightily extol it when it seems to favour 'em, yet vouchsafe it not a hearing when it makes against them, but oppose its own Authority to it self. These are high Privileges indeed, and the surest Means of having always the better of the Dispute that could possibly be devis'd.

That the mistaken Unbeliever may not say I serve a Hypothesis in the Defence of my Faith, like some who first imagine or receive an Opinion, and then study Proofs to establish it, I solemnly declare the thing is much otherwise; and that I hold nothing as an Article of my Religion, but what the highest Evidence forc'd me to embrace. For being educated, from my Cradle, in the grossest Superstition and Idolatry, God was pleas'd to make my own Reason, and such as made use of theirs, the happy Instruments
of

The Preface.

ix

of my Conversion. Thus I have been very early accustom'd to Examination and Enquiry, and taught not to captivate my Understanding, no more than my Senses to any Man or Society whatsoever. Now the best Method, I think, of communicating to others the Truth, is that by which a Man has learnt it himself.

That the well-meaning Christian may not suspect, as it falls out very ordinarily, that I aim at more than I declare, and cunningly disguise some bad Principles under the fair Pretence of defending the true Religion; I assure him that I write with all the Sincerity and Simplicity imaginable, being as thoroughly convinc'd of what I maintain, as I can be of any thing. If any good Man should after this Protestation persist to think hard of me, it must needs proceed from violent Prepossessions: for
very

The Preface.

very few can be found that are not deeply engag'd in some of one sort or another, for which a due Allowance must be made. How fond are we all apt to be of what we learn'd in our Youth, as the Sight or Remembrance of the Places where we past that agreeable Time, does strangely affect us! A Mother is more charm'd with the lisping half-form'd Words of her prattling Infant, than with the best Language, and most solid Discourses. That any Upstart, but of Yesterday, should pretend to overthrow what cost the Antients so much Time and Breath to establish, and themselves so great Pains and Charges to learn, is of hard Digestion to some. And when others are but pray'd to explain their Terms, which commonly signify nothing, or what they must be asham'd to own that would never be thought in an Error, they are uneasy, as an extravagant Mer-

The Preface.

xi

Merchant to examine his Accompts ; and 'tis well if they can restrain their Passions. Not only a few Men, but oftentimes whole Societies, whilst they consider Things but very superficially, set such a Value upon certain Sounds, as if they were the real Essence of all Religion. To question or reject any of these, tho never so false and inconvenient, is dangerous Heterodoxy: And yet, as I hinted now, they either signify nothing, or have been invented by some leading Men to make plain things obscure, and not seldom to cover their own Ignorance. What is unpardonable, the holy Scripture is put to the Torture to countenance this Scholastick Jargon, and all the metaphysical Chimeras of its Authors. But the Weakness of the greatest part of these Prejudices is so notorious, that to mention them is sufficient Confutation: Nor shall

I

I be otherwise mov'd with any thing of this Nature, than a prudent Man would be at the Declamations of such as have recourse to Railing when Reason fails them.

As for those Gentlemen who suggest that the Credulity of Popery has frighted me to an unwarrantable Distance from it; I have nothing to say for their Satisfaction, but that I don't envy them the cheap and commodious Mean they boast of, while I think Truth and Error to be the two Extreame. Religion is not to be modell'd according to our Fancies, nor to be judg'd of as it relates to our private Designs; else there would be full as many Creeds as Persons: But how little soever our Notions agree, and let our worldly Conveniences be what they will, Religion is always the same, like God its Author, with whom there is no
Va-

The Preface.

xiii

Variableness, nor Shadow of changing.

If any should ask me whether I have so good an Opinion of my own Abilities, as to imagine that I can prove a rational Account may be given of all those jarring Doctrines, ambiguous Terms, and puzzling Distinctions which have for so many Centuries sufficiently exercis'd the Learn'd of all sorts: I answer, that I don't pretend (as the Title Page can testify) that we are able to explain the Terms or Doctrines of this or that Age, Council, or Nation, (most of which are impervious Mysteries with a witness) but the Terms and Doctrines of the Gospel. They are not the Articles of the East or West, Orthodox or Arian, Protestant or Papist, consider'd as such, that I trouble myself about, but those of Jesus Christ and his Apostles. And in manag-
ing

ing this Argument, with every other good Action, I don't meerly rely upon my own poor Attainments, but also upon the Grace of God, who, I hope, will enable me to vindicate his reveal'd Will from the most unjust Imputations of Contradiction and Obscurity.

I may probably differ in many things from Persons deservedly eminent for their Learning, and Piety; but that ought to be no Advantage against me if Truth is evidently for me. Since Religion is calculated for reasonable Creatures, 'tis Conviction and not Authority that should bear Weight with them. A wise and good Man will judg of the Merits of a Cause consider'd only in it self, without any regard to Times, Places, or Persons. No Numbers, no Examples, no Interests can ever bias his solid Judgment, or corrupt his Integrity. He knows no Difference between

The Preface.

xv

tween Popish Infallibility, and being oblig'd blindly to acquiesce in the Decisions of fallible Protestants. And for my own part, as I would have none by false or unfair Consequences make me say what I never thought of; so I would not be told I contradict any thing but Scripture or Reason, which, I'm sure, agree very well together. Nor can it appear strange that I should insist upon these Terms, since I most readily submit my self to them, and give all the World the same Right over me. I am not therefore to be put out of Countenance by venerable Names, and pompous Citations, that have no Value but such as an ugly Rust and Colour give antient Coins. God alone, and such as are inspir'd by him, can prescribe Injunctions relating to the World to come, whilst human Powers regulate the Affairs of this. Now, to speak more particularly concerning

cerning the following Performance, I don't expect any Deference should be paid me by the World, that spares no body; much less am I desirous of Abettors out of Singularity: but rather if the Reasons I offer be not cogent, I shall take in good part a modest and pertinent Animadversion. And if I am not so happy in rendring things perspicuous to others, as they seem to my self, yet I have fairly aim'd at it, and spoke what I think to be Truth without Fear or Favour; wherefore my good Intentions will need no other Apology.

Some Passages in the first Section or preliminary Dissertation of Reason, which, in the former Edition, I suspected would prove a little obscure to ordinary Readers, are now rendr'd more familiar. And tho I then declar'd that the understanding of those Passages was of no Consequence to any that

The Preface.

xvii

that would reason fairly, being only inserted to prevent the foreseen Wranglings of certain Men, who study rather to protract and perplex than to terminate a Controversy; yet I could not but readily comply at this time with the Desires of those, who wish'd 'em more clearly express'd, tho it should cost me a few Words more, whereof I shall always be as sparing as I can. I have likewise every where else endeavour'd to speak very intelligibly, and am not without hope that my Assertions do carry their own Light along with them. I have in many Places made explanatory Repetitions of difficult Words, by synonymous Terms of a more general and known Use. This Labour, I grant, is of no Benefit to Philosophers, but it is of considerable Advantage to the Vulgar, which I'm far from neglecting, like those who in every Preface

a

tell

tell us they neither court nor care for them. I wonder how any can speak at this rate, especially of those whose very Business it is to serve the *Vulgar*, and spare them the Labour of long and painful Study, which their ordinary Occupations will not allow them. Lay-men pay for the Books and Maintenance of Church-men for this very end: but I'm afraid some of the latter will no more believe this, than that Magistrates too are made for the People.

Nor can any from this Office of the Clergy infer, that the *Vulgar* are implicitly to receive their Arbitrary Dictates, no more than I am to make over my Reason to him I employ to read, transcribe, or collect for me.

* The Learn'd will not, contrary to the Experience of their own Taste, take the Brewer's or the Baker's Word for the Goodness of Bread or Drink, tho
ignorant

The Preface.

xix

ignorant of their Craft. And why may not the *Vulgar* likewise be Judges of the true Sense of Things, tho they understand nothing of the Tongues from whence they are translated for their Use? Truth is always and every where the same; and an unintelligible or absurd Proposition is to be never the more respected for being antient or strange, for being originally written in Latin, Greek, or Hebrew. Besides, a Divinity only intelligible to such as live by it, is, in humane Language, a Trade; and I see not how they can be angry at the Name, that are so passionately in love with the Thing. But of this in due place.

The Poor, who are not suppos'd to understand Philosophical Systems, soon apprehended the Difference between the plain convincing Instructions of Christ, and the intricate ineffectual Declamations of the Scribes. For

the Jewish Rabbies, divided at that time into Stoick, Platonick, and Pythagorean Sects, &c. did by a mad Liberty of Allegory, accommodate the Scriptures to the wild Speculations of their several Masters. They made the People, who comprehended nothing of their Cabalistic Observations, believe 'em to be all profound Mysteries; and so taught 'em Subjection to Heathenish Rites, whilst they set the Law of God at nought by their Traditions. No wonder then if the disinterested common sort, and the more ingenuous among the Rulers, did reject these nonsensical Superstitions, tho impudently father'd upon Moses, for a Religion suted to the Capacities of all, delineated, and foretold by their own Prophets.

I wish no Application of this could be made, in the following Discourse, to the Case of any Christians; much less

The Preface.

xxi

ess to the purer and better sort: Whoever considers with what Eagerness and Rigour some Men press Obedience to their own Constitutions and Discipline, (conniving in the mean while at all Nonconformity to the Divine Law) how strictly they enjoin the Observation of unreasonable, unscriptural Ceremonies, and the Belief of those unfathomable Explanations of what they stiffly hold themselves to be incomprehensible; I say, who considers all this, is vehemently tempted to suspect they drive a more selfish Design than that of instructing the Ignorant, or converting the Sinner. That any should be hated, despis'd, and molested; nay, sometimes be charitably burn'd and damn'd, for rejecting those Fooleries superadded, and in many Cases substituted to the most blessed, pure, and practicable Religion that Men could wish or
a 3 enjoy,

enjoy, is Matter of Astonishment and Grief to such as prefer the Precepts of God to the Inventions of Men, the plain Paths of Reason to the insuperable Labyrinths of the Fathers, and true Christian Liberty to Diabolical and Antichristian Tyranny.

*

But the common Method of teaching and supporting this Mystery of Iniquity is still more intolerable. How many voluminous Systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scripture, must be read with great Attention by him that would be Master of the present Theology? What a prodigious Number of barbarous Words, (mysterious no doubt) what tedious and immethodical Directions, what ridiculous and discrepant Interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a Professor of that Faculty? The last and easiest part of your Labour will be, to find

*

The Preface.

xxiii

find his Sentiments in the Bible, tho the holy Penmen never thought of them, and you never read that sacred Book since you were a School-Boy. But a Distrust of your own Reason, a blind Veneration for those that liv'd before you, and a firm Resolution of adhering to all the Explications of your Party, will do any thing. Believe only, as a sure Foundation for all your Allegories, that the Words of Scripture, tho never so equivocal and ambiguous without the Context, may signify every where whatever they can signify: And, if this be not enough, believe that every Truth is a true Sense of every Passage of Scripture; that is, that any thing may be made of every thing: And you'll not only find all the New Testament in the Old, and all the Old in the New; but, I promise you, there's no Explication, tho never so violent,

a 4

violent, tho never so contradictory or perplex'd, but you may as easily establish as admit.

But I will not repeat what I have expressly written of this Matter in an Epistolary Dissertation, now lying by me, entitul'd, *Systems of Divinity exploded*. In the following Discourse, which is the first of three, and wherein I prove my Subject in general, the Divinity of the New Testament is taken for granted; so that it regards only Christians immediately, and others but remotely, who are pray'd to weigh my Arguments by the said Supposition. In the next Discourse, equally concerning Christians and others, I attempt a particular and rational Explanation of the reputed Mysteries of the Gospel. And in the third, I demonstrate the Verity of Divine Revelation against Atheists, and all Enemies of reveal'd Religion.

This

The Preface.

xxv

This seems to me to be the best Method; for the Order of Nature is in your Systems of Divinity quite inverted. They prove the Authority and Perfection, before they teach the Contents of Scripture; whereas the first is in great measure known by the last. *

How can any be sure that the Scripture contains all things necessary to Salvation, till he first reads it over? *

Nay, how can he conclude it to be Scripture, or the Word of God, till he exactly studies it, to speak now of no other Means he must use? This Confusion then I have carefully avoided; for I prove first, that the true Religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible. Next I shew, that these requisite Conditions are found in Christianity. But seeing a Man of good Parts and Knowledg may easily frame a clear and coherent System, I demonstrate, Thirdly, that the
Chris-

Christian Religion was not form'd after such a manner, but was divinely reveal'd from Heaven. These three Subjects I handle in as many Books; whereof, as I said before, the following Discourse is the first.

Before I finish, I must take notice of those Gentlemen who love to call Names in Religion: for what are all Party-Distinctions, but, according to them, so many sorts of Hereticks, or Schismatics, or worse? But I assure them, that I am neither of Paul, nor of Cephas, nor of Apollos, but of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, who is the Author and Finisher of my Faith. I have as much Right to have others call'd after my Name, as they to give me a Denomination, and that is no Right at all. I say not this to prevent being invidiously represented, according to a very common Artifice, under the Notion

tion of any Sect in the World that is justly or unjustly hated by others. This would be a poor Consideration indeed! but it is my settl'd Judgment, that the thing is unlawful in it self to a good Christian. Leaving others nevertheless their Liberty in this Point, it must, at least, be granted inconvenient: for if you go under the Name of a Lutheran, for instance, tho you agree with those of your Communion but in the main Articles, yet their Adversaries will not fail, upon occasion, to charge you with those other Matters wherein you dissent: And should you then declare your Judgment, the rest of the Lutherans will not only be much offended, but be apt also to call your Sincerity in question about every thing besides; which is the known Temper of most Sects. The only religious Title therefore that I shall ever own, for my part, is
that

that most glorious one of being a Christian.

A Word or two more I must add in answer to the Malice or Mistake of some, who will needs have it that I'm a declar'd Enemy to all Churchmen, and consequently (say they) to all Religion, because I make 'em the sole Contrivers of those inconceivable or mysterious Doctrines, which I also maintain are as advantageous to themselves, as they are prejudicial to the Laity. Indeed there are those, who, easily overlooking all Contempt of the true Religion, are very ready to treat 'em as pernicious Hereticks, or unsufferable Atheists, that shew the least Dislike of what are acknowledg'd Additions to Christianity, whatever Convenience or Necessity may be pretended for their Establishment. If any such understand by Religion the mysterious Part of it, then truly it will

The Preface.

xxix

will be no hard matter to prove me as little favourable to this Religion, as I'm far from making any Apologies for my self to the Professors of it.

As for charging Church-men with being the Authors and Introducers of the Christian Mysteries, they must be my Enemies for telling the Truth, who are displeas'd at it: for there is no matter of Fact more evident from every Page both of the Civil, and Ecclesiastick Histories. Nor had the Laity ever any hand in that Business, otherwise than as confirming by Legal Sanctions what they were first perswaded to by the preaching of their Priests; as they do now sometimes, at their Sollicitation, imprison excommunicated, and prosecute erroneous Persons, after the Excommunication is first pronounc'd, and the Heresy decreed or declar'd by the Clergy. Now as all Church-men are not
in

in their Opinions for these Practices, so I see no better Reason they have to be angry with any Body for writing against them that are, than a good Prince can pretend for punishing the Historian of a Tyrant's Vices, only because the Tyrant had been likewise a Prince.

*

To all corrupt Clergy-men therefore, who make a meer Trade of Religion, and build an unjust Authority upon the abus'd Consciences of the Laity, I'm a profest Adversary; as I hope every good and wise Man already is, or will be. But as I shall always remain a hearty Friend to pure and genuine Religion, so I shall preserve the highest Veneration for the sincere Teachers thereof, than whom there is not a more useful Order of Men, and without whom there could not be any happy Society or well constituted Government in this World, to speak
nothing

nothing of their Relation to the World to come, nor of the double Esteem which they deserve for keeping Proof against the general Infection of their Profession. But I have no Apprehensions from the sincere; and if the designing Party discover their Concern by their Displeasure, it may well serve for a Mark to distinguish them, but will not be thought an Injury by me.

ERRATA.

PAg. 20. l. antepen. f. any r. an. P. 122. l. 9. r. last
Chapter. P. 156. l. ult. r. *puris*. P. 166. l. 22.
r. *Decrees*.

The

The CONTENTS.

	Page
T HE State of the Question. _____	1
Sect. I. Of Reason. _____	7
Ch. 1. What Reason is not. _____	8
2. Wherein Reason consists. _____	11
3. Of the Means of Information. _____	16
4. Of the Ground of Perswasion. _____	18
Sect. II. That the Doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to Reason. _____	25
Ch. 1. The Absurdities and Effects of admitting any real or seeming Contradictions in Religion. _____	26
2. Of the Authority of Revelation, as it regards this Controversy. _____	38
3. That by Christianity was intended a Rational and Intelligible Religion, prov'd from the Mi- racles, Method, and Stile of the New Testa- ment. _____	46
4. Objections answer'd, drawn from the Pravity of Humane Reason. _____	56
Sect. III. That there is nothing <i>Mysterious</i> , or above Reason in the Gospel. _____	66
Ch. 1. The History and Signification of Mystery, in the Writings of the Gentiles. _____	67
2. That nothing ought to be call'd a Mystery, be- cause we have not an adequate Idea of all its Properties, nor any at all of its Essence. _____	74
3. The Signification of the word Mystery, in the New Testament, and the Writings of the most antient Christians. _____	88
4. Objections brought from particular Texts of Scripture, and from the Nature of Faith, an- swer'd. _____	120
5. Objections, drawn from the Consideration of MIRACLES, answer'd. _____	144
6. When, why, and by whom were Mysteries brought into Christianity. _____	151
THE CONCLUSION. _____	170

CHRIS.

(1)

CHRISTIANITY *not*
Mysterious, &c.

The State of the Question.

N^o 1. **T**HERE is nothing that Men make a greater Noise about, in our Time especially, than what they generally profess least of all to understand. It may be easily concluded, I mean *the Mysteries of the Christian Religion*. The Divines, whose peculiar Province it is to explain them to others, almost unanimously own their Ignorance concerning them. They gravely tell us, *we must adore what we cannot comprehend*: And yet some of 'em press their dubious Comments upon the rest of Mankind with more Assurance and Heat, than could be tolerably justify'd, tho we should grant them to be absolutely infallible.

B

The

213 pages in full

Christianity not Mystrious.

The worst on't is, they are not all of a Mind. If you be *Orthodox* to those, you are a *Heretick* to these. He that sides with a Party is adjudg'd to Hell by the Rest; and if he declares for none, he receives no milder Sentence from all.

2. Some of 'em say the *Mysteries of the Gospel* are to be understood only in the Sense of the *Antient Fathers*. But that is so multifarious, and inconsistent with it self, as to make it impossible for any Body to believe so many Contradictions at once. They themselves did caution their Readers from leaning upon their Authority, without the Evidence of *Reason*: And thought as little of becoming a Rule of Faith to their Posterity, as we do to ours. Moreover, as all the *Fathers* were not Authors, so we cannot properly be said to have their genuine Sense. The Works of those that have written are wonderfully corrupted and adulterated, or not entirely extant: And if they were, their Meaning is much more obscure, and subject to Controversy, than that of the *Scripture*.

3. Others

3. Others tell us we must be of the Mind of some *particular Doctors*, pronounce'd Orthodox by the Authority of the *Church*. But as we are not a whit satisfy'd with any Authority of that Nature, so we see these same *particular Doctors* could no more agree than the whole Herd of the *Fathers*; but tragically declaim'd against one another's Practices and Errors: That they were as injudicious, violent, and factious as other Men: That they were for the greatest part very credulous and superstitious in Religion, as well as pitifully ignorant and superficial in the minutest Punctilios of Literature. In a word, that they were of the same Nature and Make with our selves; and that we know of no Privilege above us bestow'd upon them by Heaven, except Priority of Birth, if that be one, as it's likely few will allow.

4. Some give a decisive Voice in the Unravelling of *Mysteries*, and the Interpretation of *Scripture*, to a *General Council*; and others to *one Man* whom they hold to be the Head of the *Church* Universal upon Earth, and the infallible Judge of all Controversies. But we

Christianity not Mystrious.

do not think such *Councils* possible, nor (if they were) to be of more Weight than the *Fathers*; for they consist of such, and others as obnoxious altogether to Mistakes and Passions: And besides, we cannot have Recourse, as to a standing Rule, for the Solution of our Difficulties, to a wonder by God's Mercy now more rarely seen than the secular Games of old. As for the *one* *Judg* of all *Controversies*, we suppose none but such as are strongly prepossess'd by Interest or Education can in good earnest digest those chimerical supreme Headships, and Monsters of Infallibility. We read no where in the *Bible* of such delegate Judges appointed by *Christ* to supply his Office: And *Reason* manifestly proclaims them frontless Usurpers. Nor is their Power finally distinguish'd from that of *Councils* to this Hour, by the miserable Admirers of both.

5. They come nearest the thing who affirm, that we are to keep to what the *Scriptures* determine about these Matters: and there is nothing more true, if rightly understood. But ordinarily 'tis an equivocal Way of speak-

Christianity not *Mysterious*.

5

speaking, and nothing less than the proper Meaning of it is intended by many of those that use it: For they make the *Scriptures* speak either according to some spurious *Philosophy*, or they conform them right or wrong to the bulky Systems and Formularies of their several Communion.

6. Some will have us always believe *what the literal Sense imports*, with little or no Consideration for *Reason*, which they reject as not fit to be employ'd about the reveal'd Part of Religion. Others assert, that we may use *Reason* as the Instrument, but not the Rule of our Belief. The first contend, some *Mysteries* may be, or at least seem to be *contrary to Reason*, and yet be receiv'd by Faith. The second, that no *Mystery* is contrary to *Reason*, but that all are *above* it. Both of 'em from different Principles agree, that several Doctrines of the *New Testament* belong no farther to the Enquiries of *Reason* than to prove 'em divinely reveal'd, and that they are properly *Mysteries* still.

B 3

7. On

7. On the contrary, we hold, that *Reason* is the only Foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its *Manner* or *Existence*, is more exempted from its Disquisitions, than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that *there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery.*

S E C.

SECTION I. Of REASON.

1. **T**HE State of the Question being thus fairly laid, our next business is to proceed to the Proof thereof. But as the distinct and brief Explanation of the Terms is of indispensable use in discussing all Controversies; so an easy and natural Method is not less pleasing than profitable. It happily falls out that the Terms of the present Question are dispos'd according to the Order I design to observe; which is, First, to shew what is meant by *Reason*, and its Properties: Then to prove there's no Doctrine of the Gospel contrary to *Reason*: After that, to evince that neither is there any of them above *Reason*; and by consequence, that none is a *Mystery*.



C H A P. I.

What REASON is not.

2. **T**O begin with the first, *viz.* Reason. It appears to me very odd, that Men should need Definitions and Explanations of that whereby they define and explain all other things: Or that they cannot agree about what they all pretend, in some measure at least, to possess; and is the only Privilege they claim over Brutes and Inanimates. But we find by Experience, that the word *Reason* is become as equivocal and ambiguous as any other; though all that are not tickl'd with the Vanity of Singularity, or Itch of Dispute, are at bottom agreed about the Thing. I'll handle it here with what Brevity I can.
3. They are mistaken who take the *Soul, abstractedly consider'd*, for *Reason*: For as the general Idea of Gold is not a Guinea, but a piece determin'd to a particular Stamp and Value; so not the Soul it self, but the Soul acting in a certain

certain and peculiar Manner, is *Reason*. Ch. 1.
 They err likewise, who affirm *Reason* to be *that Order, Report, or Relation which is naturally between all things*: For not this, but the Thoughts which the Soul forms of things according to it, may properly claim that Title. They speed no better who call *their own Inclinations*, or the *Authority of others*, by that Name. But it will better appear what it is from the following Considerations.

4. Every one experiences in himself a Power or Faculty of forming various Ideas or Perceptions of Things: Of affirming or denying, according as he sees them to agree or disagree: And so of loving and desiring what seems good unto him; and of hating and avoiding what he thinks evil. The right Use of all these Faculties is what we call Common Sense, or *Reason* in general. But the bare Act of receiving Ideas into the Mind, whether by the *Intromission of the Senses*, as Colours, Figures, Sounds, Smells, &c. or whether those Ideas be the *simple Operations of the Soul* about what it thus gets from without, as meer *Consciousness* for

Sect. I. for Example, *Knowing, Affirming, or Denying*, without any farther Considerations: This bare Act, I say, of receiving such Ideas into the Mind, is not strictly *Reason*, because the Soul herein is purely passive. When a proper Object is conveniently presented to the Eye, Ear, or any other Sense rightly dispos'd, it necessarily makes those Impressions which the Mind at the same time cannot refuse to lodg. And we find it can as little forbear being conscious of its own Thoughts or Operations concerning this Object: Thus when my Eyes are found and open, as at this time, I have not only an Idea of the Picture that is before me, but I likewise know, I perceive, and affirm that I see it, I consider it, it pleases me, I wish it were mine: And thus I form, or rather after this manner I have first form'd, the Ideas of *Knowing, Perceiving, Affirming, Denying, Considering, Willing, Desiring*, and the Ideas of all the other Operations of the Mind, which are thus occasion'd by the Antecedent Impressions of sensible Objects.

5. By

5. By the word **IDEA** which I make Ch. 2. so much use of here, and shall more frequently in the following Discourse, I understand *the immediate Object of the Mind when it thinks, or any Thought that the Mind employs about any thing, whether such a Thought be the Image or Representation of a Body, as is the Idea of a Tree; or whether it be some Sensation occasion'd by any Body, such as are the Ideas of Cold and Heat, of Smells and Tastes; or whether, lastly, it be a merely intellectual or abstracted Thought, such as are the Ideas of God and created Spirits, of Arguing, of Suspension, of Thinking in general, or the like.*

CH A P. II.

Wherein **REASON** consists.

6. **B**UT altho these simple and distinct Ideas, thus laid up in the great Repository of the Understanding, be not, as was observ'd, what we call strictly Reason, yet they are the sole Matter and Foundation of all
our


Sect. I. our *Reasoning*: For the Mind does upon occasion compare them together, compound them into complex Ideas, and enlarge, contract, or separate them, as it discovers their Circumstances capable or not. So that all our Knowledge is, in effect, nothing else but the *Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas in a greater or lesser Number, whereinssoever this Agreement or Disagreement may consist.* And because this Perception is immediate or mediate, our Knowledge is twofold.

7. First, *When the Mind, without the Assistance of any other Idea, immediately perceives the Agreement or Disagreement of two or more Ideas, as that Two and Two is Four, that Red is not Blew; it cannot be call'd Reason, tho it be the highest Degree of Evidence:* For here's no need of Discourse or Probation, *Self-evidence* excluding all manner of Doubt and Darkness. Propositions so clear of themselves as to want no Proofs, their Terms being once understood, are commonly known by the Names of *Axioms* and *Maxims*. And it is visible that their Number is indefinite, and not confin'd only to two

or

or three abstracted Propositions made Ch. 2.
(as all *Axioms* are) from the Observa-
tion of particular Instances; as, that
the Whole is greater than any Part, that
Nothing can have no Properties.

8. But, Secondly, *when the Mind cannot immediately perceive the Agreement or Disagreement of any Ideas, because they cannot be brought near enough together, and so compar'd, it applies one or more intermediate Ideas to discover it*: as, when by the successive Application of a Line to two distant Houses, I find how far they agree or disagree in Length, which I could not effect with my Eye. Thus from the Force of the Air, and the Room it takes up, I know it has Solidity and Extension; and that therefore it is as much a Body (tho I cannot see it) as Wood, or Stone, with which it agrees in the said Properties. Here *Solidity* and *Extension* are the Line by which I find *Air* and *Body* are equal, or that *Air* is a Body; because Solidity and Extension agree to both. We prove the least imaginable Particle of Matter divisible, by shewing all Bodies to be divisible; because every Particle of Matter is like-
wife

Sect. I.  wise a Body : and after the like manner, is the *Mortality* of all living Bodies inferr'd from their *Divisibility*. This Method of Knowledg is properly call'd *Reason* or *Demonstration*, (as the former *Self-evidence* or *Intuition*) ; and it may be defin'd, *That Faculty of the Soul which discovers the Certainty of any thing dubious or obscure, by comparing it with something evidently known.*

9. From this Definition it is plain, that *the intermediate Idea can be no Proof where its Agreement with both the Ideas of the Question is not evident ; and that if more than one Idea be necessary to make it appear, the same Evidence is requir'd in each of them.* For if the Connection of all the Parts of a *Demonstration* were not indubitable, we could never be certain of the Inference or Conclusion whereby we join the two Extrems : So tho *Self-evidence* excludes *Reason*, yet all *Demonstration* becomes at length *self-evident*. It is yet plainer, that *when we have no Notions or Ideas of a thing, we cannot reason about it at all ; and where we have Ideas, if intermediate ones, to shew their constant and necessary Agreement or Dis-*
agree-

agreement, *fail us, we can never go be-* Ch. 2.
yond Probability. Tho we have an Idea of *inhabited*, and an Idea of the *Moon*, yet we have no intermediate Idea to shew such a necessary Connection between them, as to make us certainly conclude that *this Planet is inhabited*, however likely it may seem. Now, *since PROBABILITY is not KNOWLEDG, I banish all HYPOTHESES from my PHILOSOPHY*; because if I admit never so many, yet *my Knowledge is not a jot increas'd*: for no evident Connection appearing between my Ideas, I may possibly take the wrong side of the Question to be the right, which is equal to knowing nothing of the Matter. When I have arriv'd at *Knowledge*, I enjoy all the Satisfaction that attends it; where I have only *Probability*, there I suspend my Judgment, or, if it be worth the Pains, I search after Certainty.

CHAP. III.

Of the Means of INFORMATION.

10. **B**UT besides these Properties of Reason which we have explain'd, we are yet most carefully to distinguish in it *the Means of Information*, from *the Ground of Persuasion*: for the Neglect of this easy Distinction has thrown Men into infinite Mistakes, as I shall prove before I have done. *The Means of Information* I call *those Ways whereby any thing comes barely to our Knowledg, without necessarily commanding our Assent.* By *the Ground of Persuasion*, I understand *that Rule by which we judg of all Truth, and which irresistibly convinces the Mind.* The *Means of Information* are *EXPERIENCE* and *AUTHORITY*: *Experience* (as you may see N^o 4.) is either external, which furnishes us with the Ideas of sensible Objects; or internal, which helps us to the Ideas of the Operations of our own Minds. This is the common Stock of all

all our Knowledge; nor can we possibly have Ideas any other way without new Organs or Faculties. Ch. 3.

II. *Authority*, abusively so call'd, as if all its Informations were to be receiv'd without Examen, is either *Humane* or *Divine*: *Humane Authority* is call'd also *Moral Certitude*; as when I believe an intelligible Relation made by my Friend, because I have no Reason to suspect his Veracity, nor he any Interest to deceive me. Thus all possible Matters of Fact, duly attested by co-evous Persons as known to them, and successively related by others of different Times, Nations, or Interests, who could neither be impos'd upon themselves, nor be justly suspected of combining together to deceive others, ought to be receiv'd by us for as certain and indubitable as if we had seen them with our own Eyes, or heard them with our own Ears. By this means it is, I believe there was such a City as Carthage, such a Reformer as Luther, and that there is such a Kingdom as Poland. When all these Rules concur in any Matter of Fact, I take it then for *Demonstration*, which is nothing else but *Irresistible Evidence from*

C
proper

Se^{ct}. I. *proper Proofs*: But where any of these Conditions are wanting, the thing is *uncertain*, or, at best, but *probable*, which, with me, are not very different.

12. The *Authority of God, or Divine Revelation*, is the Manifestation of Truth by Truth it self, to whom it is impossible to lie: Whereof at large in Ch. 2. of the following Section. Nothing in Nature can come to our Knowledge but by some of these four means, *viz. The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind, Humane and Divine Revelation.*

CHAP. IV.

Of the Ground of PERSUASION.

13. **N**OW, as we are extremely subject to Deception, we may, without some infallible Rule, often take a questionable Proposition for an *Axiom*, Old Wives Fables for *Moral Certitude*, and Humane Impositions for *Divine Revelation*. This infallible Rule, or Ground of all right *Persuasion*, is *Evidence*; and it consists in

in the exact Conformity of our Ideas or Ch. 4,
Thoughts with their Objects, or the Things we think upon. For as we have only Ideas in us, and not the Things themselves, 'tis by those we must form a Judgment of these.

14. Ideas therefore being Representative Beings, their Evidence naturally consists in the Property they have of truly representing their Objects. Nor that I think every Idea has a perfect Pattern to represent, as the Ideas of *Length* and *Motion* in my Mind are like the *Length* and *Motion* of the Pen I handle; for some Ideas are but the Result of certain Powers in the Particles of Bodies to OCCASION particular Sensations in us; as the *Sweetness* of Sugar and the *Cold* of Ice, are no more inherent in them than *Pain* in the Knife that cuts me, or *Sickness* in the Fruit that surfeits me. But tho such occasional Ideas have no Existence out of our Imagination, yet the Pleasure, Pain, and other Qualities they excite, shew us the Good or Harm their Subjects may do us; which renders the Knowledge of them as useful as that of the Properties which really exist in the

C 2

Things

W Sect. I. Things themselves. Without the *Heat* and *Light* of Fire, what should its *Figure* and *Quantity* serve for? And what sets a Price upon Amber-greece, but the *Perfume*? The Reason then why I believe the Idea of a Rose to be evident, is the true Representation it gives me of that Flower. I know it is true, because the Rose must contain all the Properties which its Idea exhibits, either *really*, as the Bulk and Form, or *occasionally*, as the Colour, Taste and Smell. And I cannot doubt of this, because the Properties must belong to the exemplary Cause, or to Nothing, or be the Figments of my own Brain: But *Nothing* can have no Properties; and I cannot make one single Idea at my Pleasure, nor avoid receiving Ideas when Objects work on my Senses: Therefore I conclude the Properties of the Rose are not the Creatures of my Fancy, but belong to the exemplary Cause, that is, the Object.

15. The Evidence of the Ideas of the Operations of the Mind, is infallible as that of our own Being; and if by any Impossibility we should call the latter in question, 'twould but serve to give us.

is the greater Assurance of it : For be- Ch. 4.
sides the unavoidable Supposition of our Existence in this very Proposition, *I doubt if I am*; so it is clear, that whatever doubts must needs be as much something as what affirms, and this something I call *my self*. Let us now but strictly require this *Evidence* in all the Agreements and Disagreements of our Ideas in things merely speculative, and as far as we can in Matters of common Practice, (for these must of necessity sometimes admit *Probability* to supply the Defect of *Demonstration*); and we may without a lazy Reliance upon *Authority*, or a sceptical *Progress to Infinity*, successfully trace the Truth, and bring it to view the Light from those subterraneous Caverns where it is suppos'd to lie conceal'd. It is impossible for us to err as long as we take *Evidence* for our Guide; and we never mistake, but when we wander from it by abusing our *Liberty*, in *denying that of any thing which belongs to it, or attributing to it what we do not see in its Idea*. This is the primary and universal Origin of all our *Errors*.

Sect. I.

16. But God the wise Creator of all, (ever to be nam'd and thought upon with Reverence) who has enabl'd us to perceive Things, and form Judgments of them, has also endu'd us with the Power of *suspending our Judgments about whatever is uncertain, and of never assenting but to clear Perceptions.* He is so far from putting us upon any Necessity of erring, that as he has thus privileg'd us on the one hand with a Faculty of guarding our selves against Prepossession, or Precipitation, by *placing our Liberty only in what is indifferent, or dubious and obscure*; so he provides on the other hand, that we should discern and embrace the Truth, *by taking it out of our Power to dissent from an evident Proposition.* We must necessarily believe, *that it is impossible the same thing should be and not be at once*: Nor can all the World perswade us to doubt of it. But we need not admit that there's no Void in Nature, or that the Earth absolves an annual Course about the Sun, till we get *Demonstrations* to that Effect.

17. If People precipitate their Assent, either because they find the Search of Truth

Truth attended with more Difficulties Ch. 4. *than they are willing to run through, or because they would not seem to be ignorant of any thing, this is their fault. Wherefore let us attribute all our false Notions to our own Anticipation and Inattention: Let us confess our Destruction to be of our selves; and cheer-* 2 Pet. 2.1. *fully thank our kind Disposer, who has put us under a Law of bowing before the Light and Majesty of Evidence. And truly if we might doubt of any thing that is clear, or be deceiv'd by distinct Conceptions, there could be nothing certain: Neither Conscience, nor God himself, should be regarded; No Society or Government could subsist. But it is as true, that if we could not suspend our Assent to dubious or obscure Propositions, Almighty Goodness (which is impossible) should be the real Cause of all our Errors.*

18. If it should be ask'd, why Assent is deny'd to true Propositions, since *Evidence* necessarily requires it? I answer, 'tis because they are not made evident: For Perspicuity and Obscurity are relative Terms, and what is either to me may be the quite contrary

Se^{ct}. I. to another. If Things be deliver'd in
Words not understood by the Hearer,
nor demonstrat'd to agree with other
Truths already very clear, or now so
made to him, he cannot conceive 'em.
Likewise if the Order of Nature
and due Simplicity be not observ'd,
he cannot see them evidently true or
false; and so suspends his Judgment,
(if no Affection sways him) where
another, it may be, receives perfect Sa-
tisfaction. Hence it is that we fre-
quently, with Indignation and Won-
der, attribute that to the Stupidity and
Obstinacy of others, which is the Fruit
of our own confus'd Ratiocination, for
want of having thoroughly digested our
Thoughts; or by affecting ambiguous
Expressions, and using such as the o-
ther has no Ideas to at all, or different
ones from ours.

S E C T.

SECT. II.

That the Doctrines of the Gospel are not contrary to Reason.

I. **A**FTER having said so much of *Reason*, I need not operose-ly shew what it is to be contrary to it; for I take it to be very intelligible from the precedent Section, that *what is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct Ideas, or to our common Notions, is contrary to Reason*: I go on therefore to prove, that *the Doctrines of the Gospel*, if it be the Word of God, *cannot be so*. But if it be objected, that very few maintain they are: I reply, that no *Christian* I know of now (for we shall not disturb the Ashes of the Dead) expressly says *Reason* and the *Gospel* are contrary to one another. But, which returns to the

Sect. II. the same, very many affirm, that tho
 ~~~~~ the Doctrines of the latter cannot in  
 themselves be contradictory to the  
 Principles of the former, as proceeding  
 both from God; yet, that according to  
 our Conceptions of them, *they may seem*  
*directly to clash*: And that tho we can-  
 not reconcile them by reason of our  
 corrupt and limited Understandings;  
 yet that from the Authority of *Di-*  
*vine Revelation*, we are bound to be-  
 lieve and acquiesce in them; or, as the  
*Fathers* taught 'em to speak, *to adore*  
*what we cannot comprehend.*

---

## C H A P. I.

*The Absurdity and Effects of ad-*  
*mitting any real or seeming Con-*  
*tradictions in RELIGION.*

2. **T**HIS famous and admirable  
 Doctrine is the undoubted  
 Source of all the *Absurdities* that ever  
 were seriously vented among *Christi-*  
*ans*. Without the Pretence of it, we  
 should never hear of the *Transubstan-*  
*tiation,*



tiation, and other ridiculous Fables of Ch. 1. the Church of *Rome*; nor of any of the *Eastern Ordures*, almost all receiv'd into this *Western Sink*: Nor should we be ever banter'd with the *Lutheran Impanation*, or the *Ubiquity* it has produc'd, as one Monster ordinarily begets another. And tho the *Socinians* disown this Practice, I am mistaken if either they or the *Arians* can make their Notions of a *dignifi'd and Creature-God capable of Divine Worship*, appear more reasonable than the Extravagancies of other Sects touching the Article of the *Trinity*.

3. In short, this Doctrine is the known Refuge of some Men, when they are at a loss in explaining any Passage of the Word of God. Lest they should appear to others less knowing than they would be thought, they make nothing of fathering that upon the secret Counsels of the Almighty, or the Nature of the Thing, which is, it may be, the Effect of Inaccurate Reasoning, Unskilfulness in the Tongues, or Ignorance of History. But more commonly it is the Consequence of *early Impressions*, which they dare seldom

Sect. II. dom afterwards correct by more free  
 and riper Thoughts: So *desiring to be*  
 1 Tim. i. 7. *Teachers of the Law, and understanding*  
*neither what they say, nor those things*  
*which they affirm, they obtrude upon us*  
 Mat. 15. 9. *for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.*

And truly well they may; for if we  
 once admit this Principle, I know not  
 what we can deny that is told us in  
 the Name of the Lord. This Do-  
 ctrine, I must remark it too, does high-  
 ly concern us of the *Laitie*; for how-  
 ever it came to be first establish'd, the  
*Clergy* (always excepting such as de-  
 serve it) have not been since wanting  
 to themselves, but improv'd it so far as  
 not only to make the plainest, but the  
 most trifling things in the World *myste-  
 rious*, that we might constantly depend  
 upon them for the Explication. And  
 nevertheless, they must not, if they  
 could, explain them to us, without  
 ruining their own Design, let them  
 never so fairly pretend it. But, over-  
 looking all Observations proper for  
 this Place, let us enter upon the imme-  
 diate Examen of the Opinion it self.

- O 4. The first thing I shall insist upon  
 is, that if any Doctrine of the *New*  
*Testa-*

*Testament* be contrary to Reason, we Ch. 1.  
have no manner of Idea of it. To  
say, for instance, that a *Ball is white*  
*and black at once*, is to say just nothing;  
for these Colours are so incompatible  
in the same Subject, as to exclude all  
Possibility of a real positive Idea or  
Conception. So to say, as the *Papists*,  
that *Children dying before Baptism are*  
*damn'd without Pain*, signifies nothing  
at all: For if they be intelligent Crea-  
tures in the other World, to be eter-  
nally excluded God's Presence, and  
the Society of the Blessed, must prove  
ineffable Torment to them. But if  
they think they have no Understand-  
ing, then they are not capable of  
Damnation in their Sense; and so they  
should not say they are in *Limbo-*  
*Dungeon*, but that either they had no  
Souls, or were annihilated; which  
(had it been true, as they can never  
shew) would be reasonable enough,  
and easily conceiv'd. Now if we have  
no Ideas of a thing, it is certainly but  
lost Labour for us to trouble our selves  
about it: For what I don't conceive,  
can no more give me right Notions of  
God, or influence my Actions, than

Sect. II. a Prayer deliver'd in an unknown  
 ~~~~~ Tongue can excite my Devotion: If

1 Cor. 14. the Trumpet gives an uncertain Sound,
 8, 9. who shall prepare himself to the Battel?

And except Words easy to be understood
 be utter'd, how shall it be known what is
 spoken? Syllables, tho never so well
 put together, if they have not Ideas
 Ver. 9. fix'd to them, are but Words spoken in
 the Air; and cannot be the Ground of

Rom. 12. 1. a reasonable Service, or Worship.

5. If any should think to evade the
 Difficulty by saying, that the Ideas of
 certain Doctrines may be contrary in-
 deed to common Notions, yet consi-
 stent with themselves, and I know
 not what supra-intellectual Truths, he's
 but just where he was. But supposing
 a little that the thing were so; it still
 follows, that none can understand these
 Doctrines except their Perceptions be
 communicated to him in an extraor-
 dinary manner, as by new Powers and
 Organs. And then too, others cannot
 be edifi'd by what is discours'd of 'em,
 unless they enjoy the same Favour. So
 that if I would go preach the Gospel
 to the *Wild Indians*, I must expect the
 Ideas of my Words should be, I know

not

not how, infus'd into their Souls in Ch. 1.
 order to apprehend me: and according to this Hypothesis, they could no more, without a Miracle, understand my Speech than the chirping of Birds; and if *they knew not the Meaning of my Voice, I should even to them be a Barbarian, notwithstanding I spoke Mysteries in the Spirit.* But what do they mean by consulting with themselves, yet not with our common Notions? *Four* may be call'd *Five* in Heaven; but so the Name only is chang'd, the Thing remains still the same. And since we cannot in this World know any thing but by our common Notions, how shall we be sure of this pretended Consistency between our present seeming Contradictions, and the Theology of the World to come? For as 'tis by Reason we arrive at the Certainty of God's own Existence, so we cannot otherwise discern his Revelations but by their Conformity with our natural Notices of him, which is in so many words, to agree with our common Notions.

6. The next thing I shall remark is, That those, who stick not to say *they could believe a downright Contradiction*

Sect. II. *to Reason, did they find it contain'd in the*
 ~~~~~ *Scripture, do justify all Absurdities*  
 whatsoever; and, by opposing one  
 Light to another, undeniably make  
 God the Author of all Incertitude.  
 The very Supposition, that Reason  
 might authorize one thing, and the  
 Spirit of God another, throws us into  
 inevitable *Scepticism*; for we shall be  
 at a perpetual Uncertainty which to o-  
 bey: Nay, we can never be sure which  
 is which. For the Proof of the Di-  
 vinity of *Scripture* depending upon  
 Reason, if the clear Light of the one  
 might be any way contradicted, how  
 shall we be convinc'd of the Infallibility  
 of the other? Reason may err in this  
 Point as well as in any thing else; and  
 we have no particular Promise it shall  
 not, no more than the *Papists* that  
 their Senses may not deceive them in  
 every thing as well as in *Transubstantia-*  
*tion*. To say it bears witness to it self,  
 is equally to establish the *Alcoran* or  
 the *Poran*. And 'twere a notable Ar-  
 gument to tell a *Heathen*, that the  
*Church* has declar'd it, when all So-  
 cieties will say as much for themselves,  
 if we take their word for it. Besides,  
 it

it may be, he would ask whence the *Church* had Authority to decide this Matter? And if it should be answer'd from the *Scripture*, a thousand to one but he would divert himself with this Circle. You must believe that the *Scripture* is Divine, because the *Church* has so determin'd it, and the *Church* has this deciding Authority from the *Scripture*. 'Tis doubted if this Power of the *Church* can be prov'd from the Passages alledg'd to that purpose; but the *Church* it self (a Party concern'd) affirms it. Hey-day! are not these eternal Rounds very exquisite Inventions to giddy and entangle the Unthinking and the Weak?

7. But if we believe the *Scripture* to be Divine, not upon its own bare Assertion, but from a real Testimony consisting in the Evidence of the things contain'd therein; from undoubted Effects, and not from Words and Letters; what is this but to prove it by *Reason*? It has in it self, I grant, the brightest Characters of *Divinity*: But 'tis *Reason* finds them out, examines them, and by its Principles approves and pronounces them sufficient; which

D

order-

Sect. II. orderly begets in us an Acquiescence of *Faith* or Perswasion. Now if Particulars be thus severely sifted; if not only the Doctrine of *Christ* and his *Apostles* be consider'd, but also their Lives, Predictions, Miracles, and Deaths; surely all this Labour would be in vain, might we upon any account dispense with Contradictions. O! blessed and commodious System, that dischargest at one stroak those troublesome Remarks about History, Language, figurative and literal Senses, Scope of the Writer, Circumstances, and other Helps of Interpretation! We judg of a Man's Wisdom and Learning by his Actions, and his Discourses; but God, who we are assur'd

Acts 14. 17. *has not left himself without a Witness,* must have no Privileges above the maddest Enthusiast, or the Devil himself, at this rate.

8. But a Veneration for the very Words of God will be pretended: This we are pleas'd with; for we know

Num. 23. 19. *that God is not a Man that he should lie.* But the Question is not about the Words, but their Sense, which must be ever worthy of their Author, and there-



therefore according to the Genius of all Ch. I. Speech, figuratively interpreted, when occasion requires it. Otherwise, under pretence of *Faith in the Word of God*, the highest Follies and Blasphemies may be deduc'd from the Letter of *Scripture*; as, that God is subject to Passions, is the Author of Sin, that *Christ* is a Rock, was actually guilty of and defil'd with our Transgressions, that we are Worms or Sheep, and no Men. And if a Figure be admitted in these Passages, why not, I pray, in all Expressions of the like Nature, when there appears an equal Necessity for it?

9. It may be demanded why I have so long insisted upon this Article, since that none expressly makes *Scripture* and *Reason* contradictory, was acknowledg'd before? But in the same place mention is made of some who hold, that *they may seem directly to clash*; and that tho we cannot reconcile them together, yet that we are bound to acquiesce in the Decisions of the former. A *seeming* Contradiction is to us as much as a *real* one; and our Respect for the *Scripture* does not require us to

Sect. II. grant any such in it, but rather to conclude, that we are ignorant of the right Meaning when a Difficulty occurs; and so to *suspend our Judgment concerning it, till with sutable Helps and Industry we discover the Truth.* As for acquiescing in what a Man understands not, or cannot reconcile to his Reason, they know best the fruits of it that practise it. For my part, I'm a Stranger to it, and cannot reconcile my self to such a Principle. On the contrary, I am pretty sure *he pretends in vain to convince the Judgment, who explains not the Nature of the Thing.* A Man may give his verbal Assent to he knows not what, out of *Fear, Superstition, Indifference, Interest,* and the like feeble and unfair Motives: but as long as he conceives not what he believes, he cannot sincerely acquiesce in it, and remains depriv'd of all solid Satisfaction. He is constantly perplex'd with Scruples not to be remov'd by his *implicite Faith*; and so is ready to be shaken, and carry'd away with every wind of *Doctrine.* I will believe because I will believe, that is, *because I'm in the Humour so to do,* is the top of his Apology.

Ephes. 4.  
14.

logy. Such are unreasonable Men, *Ch. 1.*  
*walking after the Vanity of their Minds,*  
*having their Understandings darken'd,* *Ephes. 4.*  
*being Strangers to the Life of God* *17, 18.*  
*through the Ignorance that is in them,*  
*because of the Hardness of their Hearts.*

But he that comprehends a thing, is as sure of it as if he were himself the Author. He can never be brought to suspect his Profession; and, if he be honest, will always render a pertinent account of it to others.

10. The natural Result of what has been said is, That to believe the Divinity of *Scripture*, or the Sense of any Passage thereof, without rational Proofs, and an evident Consistency, is a blameable Credulity, and a temerarious Opinion, ordinarily grounded upon an ignorant and wilful Disposition, but more generally maintain'd out of a gainful Prospect. For we frequently embrace certain Doctrines not from any convincing Evidence in them, but because they serve our Designs better than the Truth; and because other Contradictions we are not willing to quit, are better defended by their means.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the Authority of REVELATION,  
as it regards this Controversy.*

11. **A**gainst all that we have been establishing in this Section, the *Authority of Revelation* will be alledg'd with great shew, as if without a Right of silencing or extinguishing REASON, it were altogether useleſs and impertinent. But if the Distinction I made in the precedent Section, N. 9. be well consider'd, the Weakness of the present Objection will quickly appear, and this Controversy be better understood hereafter. There I said REVELATION was not a necessitating Motive of Assent, but a *Mean of Information*. We should not confound the Way whereby we come to the knowledge of a thing, with the Grounds we have to believe it. A Man may inform me concerning a thousand Matters I never heard of before, and of which I should not as much as think if

I

I were not told ; yet I believe nothing Ch. 2.  
purely upon his word without *Evidence* in the things themselves. Not the bare Authority of him that speaks, but the clear Conception I form of what he says, is the *Ground of my Perswasion*.

12. If the sincerest Person on Earth should assure me he saw a Cane without two ends, I neither should nor could believe him ; because this Relation plainly contradicts the Idea of a Cane. But if he told me he saw a Staff that, being by chance laid in the Earth, did after some time put forth Sprigs and Branches, I could easily rely upon his Veracity ; because this no way contradicts the Idea of a Staff, nor transcends Possibility.

13. I say *Possibility* ; for *Omnipotency* it self can do no more. They impose upon themselves and others, who require Assent to things contradictory, because God, say they, *can do all things, and it were limiting of his Power to affirm the contrary*. Very good ! we heartily believe God can do all things : But that meer NOTHING should be the Object of his Power, the very *Omnipotency* alledg'd will not permit us to

Sect. II. conceive. And that every *Contradiction*, which is a Synonym for *Impossibility*, is *pure nothing*, we have already sufficiently demonstrated. To say, for example, that *a thing is extended and not extended, is round and square at once*, is to say *nothing*; for these Ideas destroy one another, and cannot subsist together in the same Subject. But when we clearly perceive a perfect Agreement and Connection between the Terms of any Proposition, we then conclude it possible because intelligible: So I understand God may render immediately solid, what has been hitherto fluid; make present Beings cease to exist or change their Forms; and call

Rom. 4. 17. *those things that are not, as tho they were.* When we say then, *that nothing is impossible with God*, or that he can do all things, we mean whatever is possible in it self, however far above the Power of Creatures to effect.

14. Now, such is the Nature of a Matter of Fact, that tho it may be conceiv'd possible enough, yet he only can with Assurance assert its Existence who is himself the Author, or by some *Means of Information* comes first to the

the certain knowledg of it. That there Ch. 2.  
was such an Island as *Jamaica*, no *Eu-  
ropean* could ever reasonably deny :  
And yet that it was precisely situated  
in such a Latitude, was water'd with  
those Rivers, cloth'd with these  
Woods, bore this Grain, produc'd that  
Plant, no *English-man* before the Dis-  
covery of *America*, could positively  
affirm.

15. Thus God is pleas'd to reveal  
to us in *Scripture* several wonderful  
Matters of Fact, as *the Creation of the  
World, the last Judgment*, and many  
other important Truths, which no Man  
left to himself could ever imagine, no  
more than any of my fellow-Creatures  
can be sure of my private Thoughts :  
*For who knoweth the things of a Man* 1 Cor. 2. ii.  
*save the Spirit of a Man that is in him ?*  
*even so the things of God knoweth none*  
*but the Spirit of God.* But as *secret things*  
*belong unto the Lord ; so those things* Deut. 29.  
*which are reveal'd, belong unto us and to*  
*our Children.* Yet, as we discours'd be-  
fore, we do not receive them only be-  
cause they are reveal'd : For *besides the*  
*infallible Testimony of the Revelation*  
*from all requisite Circumstances, we must*  
see

Sect. II. *see in its Subject the indisputable Characters of* **DIVINE WISDOM and SOUND REASON**; which are the only Marks we have to distinguish the Oracles and Will of God, from the Impositions and Traditions of Men.

16. *Whoever reveals any thing, that is, whoever tells us something we did not know before, his Words must be intelligible, and the Matter possible.* This **RULE** holds good, let God or Man be the Revealer. If we count that Person a Fool who requires our Assent to what is manifestly incredible, how dare we blasphemously attribute to *the most perfect Being*, what is an acknowledg'd Defect in one of our selves? As for unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man; for the conceiv'd Ideas of things are the only Subjects of Believing, Denying, Approving, and every other Act of the Understanding: Therefore *all Matters reveal'd by God or Man, must be equally intelligible and possible*; so far both Revelations agree. But in this they differ, that tho' the Revelation of Man should be thus qualifi'd, yet *he may impose*



*impose upon me as to the Truth of the* Ch. 2.  
*thing*; whereas what God is pleas'd to discover to me is not only clear to my Reason, (without which his Revelation could make me no wiser) but likewise *it is always true.* A Man, for Example, acquaints me that he has found a Treasure: This is plain and possible, but he may easily deceive me. God assures me, that he has form'd Man of Earth: This is not only possible to God, and to me very intelligible; but the thing is also most certain, *God not being capable to deceive me, as Man is.* We are then to expect the same degree of *Perspicuity* from God as from Man, tho more of *Certitude* from the first than the last.

17. This Reason perswades, and the Scriptures expressly speak it. Those *Prophets* or *Dreamers* were to be ston'd Deut. 13. to Death that should go about to seduce the People from the Worship of One God to \* *Polytheism*, tho they should confirm their Doctrine by *Signs and Wonders.* And tho a Prophet spoke in the Name of the Lord, yet if the thing  
*prophe-*


---

\* *The Service of many Gods.*

Sect. II. *propheſt'd did not come to paſs*, it was to  
 be a rational Sign *he ſpoke preſumptu-*  
 Deut. 18. *ouſly of himſelf, and not of God.* It  
 21, 22. was reveal'd to the Prophet *Jeremy* in

Prifon, that his Uncle's Son would ſell  
 Jer. 32. 7, 8 his Field to him, *but he did not conclude*  
*it to be the Word of the Lord till his*  
*Kinſman actually came to ſtrike the Bar-*  
*gain with him.* The Virgin *MART*,  
 tho of that Sex that's leaſt Proof a-  
 gainſt Flattery and Superſtition, did  
 not implicitly believe *ſhe ſhould bear a*  
 Luke 1. *Child that was to be call'd the Son of the*  
 34, 35. *moſt High, and of whoſe Kingdom there*  
*ſhould be no end,* till the *Angel* gave her  
 a ſatisfactory Answer to the ſtrongeſt  
 Objection that could be made: Nor  
 did ſhe then conclude (ſo unlike was  
 ſhe to her preſent Worſhippers) it  
 ſhould unavoidably come to paſs; but  
 humbly acknowledging the Poſſibility,  
 Ver. 38. and her own Unworthineſs, ſhe qui-  
 etly wiſh'd and expected the Event.

18. In how many places are we ex-  
 hortet to *beware of falſe Prophets* and  
 Mat. 7. 14. *Teachers, Seducers and Deceivers?* We  
 2 Tim. 3. *are not only to prove or try all things,*  
 13. *and to hold faſt that which is beſt, but*  
 Tit. 1. 10. *also to try the Spirits whether they be of*  
 1 Theſſ. 5. *God.*  
 21.  
 1 Joh. 4. 1.

God. But how shall we try? how Ch. 2.  
shall we discern? Not as the Horse and   
Mule which have no Understanding, but Psal. 32.9.  
as circumspect and wise Men, judging Eph. 5.15;  
what is said. In a word, it was from 1 Cor. 10.  
clear and weighty Reasons, both as to 15.  
Fact and Matter, and not by a blind O-  
bedience, that the Men of God of old  
embrac'd his Revelations, which on the  
like Account we are willing to receive  
of their hands. I am not ignorant how  
some boast they are strongly perswaded  
by the illuminating and efficacious Opera-  
tion of the Holy Spirit, and that they  
neither have nor approve other Reasons  
of their FAITH: But we shall en-  
deavour in its proper place to unde-  
ceive them; for no Adversary, how  
absurd or trifling soever, ought to be  
superciliously disregarded by an un-  
feign'd Lover of Men and Truth. So  
far of REVELATION; only in mak-  
ing it a Mean of Information, I fol-  
low Paul himself, who tells the Corin-  
thians, that he cannot profit them except  
he speaks to them by Revelation, or by 1 Cor. 14. 6.  
Knowledg, or by Prophefying, or by  
Doctrine.

C H A P. III.

*That by CHRISTIANITY was intended a Rational and Intelligible Religion; prov'd from the Miracles, Method and Stile of the New Testament.*

19. **W**HAT we discours'd of REASON before, and REVELATION now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with *Natural Reason*, and our own ordinary Ideas. This every considerate and wel-dispos'd Person will find by the careful perusal of it: And whoever undertakes this Task, will confess the Gospel *not to be hidden from us, nor afar off, but very nigh us, in our Mouths, and in our Hearts.* It affords the most illustrious Examples of close and perspicuous Ratiocination conceivable; which is incumbent on me in the

Deut. 30.  
11, 14.

the Explication of its MYSTERIES, Ch. 3. to demonstrate. And tho the Evidence of *Christ's* Doctrine might claim the Approbation of the *Gentiles*, and its Conformity with the Types and Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, with all the Marks of the *MESSIAH* concurring in his Person, might justly challenge the Assent of his Countrymen; yet to leave no room for doubt, he proves his Authority and Gospel by such Works, and Miracles as the stiff-neck'd *Jews* themselves could not deny to be Divine. *Nicodemus* says to him, Joh. 3. 2. *No Man can do these Miracles which thou do'st, except God be with him.* Some of the Pharisees acknowledg'd *no Sinner* Joh. 9. 16. *could do such things.* And others, that *they exceeded the Power of the Devil.* Joh. 10. 21.

20. JESUS himself appeals to his very Enemies, ready to stone him for pretended Blasphemy, saying; *If I do* Joh. 10. *not the Works of my Father, believe me* 37, 38. *not: But if I do, believe not me, believe the Works; that you may know, and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him:* That is, believe not rashly on me, and so give a Testimony to my Works; but search the *Scriptures*, which testify of the

Sect. II. the *Messiah*; consider the Works I do, whether they be such as become God, and are attributed to him: If they be, then conclude and believe that I am he, &c. In effect, several of the Peo-

Joh. 7. 31. ple said, *that Christ when he should come could do no greater Wonders*; and many

Joh. 2. 23. *of the Jews believ'd, when they saw the Miracles which he did.*

Heb. 2. 3, 4. 21. *How shall we escape, says the Apostle, if we neglect so great a Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own Will? Those who heard Christ, the Author of our Religion, speak, and saw the Wonders which he wrought, renounce*

2 Cor. 4. 2. *all the hidden things of Dishonesty, all Craftiness and deceitful handling of the Word of God: And that they manifest nothing but Truth, they commend themselves to every Man's Conscience, that is, they appeal to every Man's Reason, in the Sight of God. Peter exhorts*

1 Pet. 3. 15. *Christians to be ready always to give an Answer to every one that asks them a Reason of their Hope. Now to what purpose*

purpose serv'd all these Miracles, all Ch. 3.  
these Appeals, if no Regard was to be had of Mens Understandings? if the Doctrines of *Christ* were incomprehensible, contradictory; or were we oblig'd to believe reveal'd Non-jense? Now if these Miracles be true, *Christianity* must consequently be intelligible; and if false, (which our Adversaries will not grant) they can be then no Arguments against us.

22. But to insist no longer upon such Passages, all Men will own the Verity I defend, if they read the sacred Writings with that Equity and Attention that is due to meer Humane Works: Nor is there any different Rule to be follow'd in the Interpretation of *Scripture* from what is common to all other Books. Whatever unprejudic'd Person shall use those Means, will find them notorious Deceivers, or much deceiv'd themselves, who maintain the *New Testament* is written without any Order or certain Scope, but just as Matters came into the *Apostles* Heads, whether transported with Enthusiastick Fits, (as some will have it) or, according to others,

E

for

Sect. II. for lack of good Sense and a liberal Education. I think I may justly say, that they are Strangers to true Method, who complain of this Confusion and Disorder. But the Proof of the Case depends not upon Generalities: Tho, whenever it is prov'd, I will not promise that every one shall find a Justification of the *particular Method* he was taught, or he has chosen, to follow. *To defend any PARTT is not my business, but to discover the TRUTH.*

23. The Facility of the GOSPEL. is not confin'd only to Method; for the Stile is also most easy, most natural, and in the common Dialect of those to whom it was immediately consign'd. Should any preach in *Xenophon's* strain to the present *Greeks*, or in correct *English* to the Country-People in *Scotland*, 'twould cost them much more Time and Pains to learn the very Words, than the Knowledge of the Things denoted by them. Of old, as well as in our time, the *Jews* understood *Hebrew* worse than the Tongues of those Regions where they dwelt. No Pretences therefore can be



be drawn from the Obscurity of the Ch. 3.  
Language in favour of the *irrational Hypothesis*: for all Men are suppos'd to understand the daily Use of their Mother-Tongue; whereas the Stile of the Learned is unintelligible to the Vulgar. And the plainest Authors that write as they speak, without the Disguise of pompous Elegance, have ever been accounted the best by all good Judges. It is a visible Effect of Providence that we have in our Hands the Monuments of the *Old Testament*, which in the *New* are always suppos'd, quoted, or alluded to. Nor is that all, for the *Jewish* Service and Customs continue to this day. If this had been true of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, we should be furnish'd with those Helps to understand aright many unknown Particulars of their Religion, which make us Rulers and Teachers in *Israel*. Besides, we have the *Talmud*, and other Works of the *Rabbins*, which, however otherwise useless, give us no small Light into the antient Rites and Language. And if after all we should be at a loss about the Meaning of any Expression, we ought rather to charge

Sect. II. it upon Distance of Time, and the want of more Books in the same Tongue, than to attribute it to the Nature of the thing, or the Ignorance of the Author, who might be easily understood by his Country-men and Contemporaries. But no Truth is to be establish'd, nor Falshood confuted from such Passages, no more than any can certainly divine his Fortune from the Sound of *Bow-bell*.

24. If any object, that the *Gospel* is penn'd with little or no Ornament, that there are no choice of Words, nor studi'd Expressions in it; the Accusation is true, and the Apostles themselves acknowledg it: nor is there a more palpable Demonstration of their having design'd to be understood by

I Cor. 2. 1. all. *I came not to you, says Paul, with Excellency of Speech, or Wisdom, declaring unto you the Testimony of God.*

Ver. 4. *My Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing Words of Humane Wisdom, but in Demonstration, or Conviction of the Spirit or Mind, and in Power or Efficacy.* This he speaks in reference to the *Philosophers* and *Orators* of those Times, whose Elocution, 'tis confess'd, was

was curious; and Periods elaborate, Ch. 3.  
apt to excite the Admiration of the Hearers, but not to satisfy their Reasons; charming indeed their Senses whilst in the *Theatre*, or the *Temple*, but making them neither the better at home, nor the wiser abroad.

25. These Men, as well as many of their *modern Successors*, were fond enough of their own ridiculous Systems, *to count the things of God Foolishness*, 1 Cor. 2. because they did not agree with their precarious and sensual Notions; because every Sentence was not wrapp'd up in *Mystery*, and garnish'd with a Figure: not considering that only false or trivial Matters need the Assistance of alluring Harangues to perplex or amuse. But they were Enemies and Strangers to the Simplicity of Truth. *All their Study*, as we took notice, *lay in tickling the Passions of the People at their Pleasure with bombast Eloquence, and apish Gesticulations*. They boasted their Talent of perswading for or against any thing. And as he was esteem'd the best *Orator* that made the worst Cause appear the most equitable before the Judges, so he was the

14

Sect. II. best *Philosopher* that could get the wildest Paradox to pass for Demonstration. They were only concern'd about their own Glory and Gain, which they could not otherwise support, but (according to an Artifice that never fails, and therefore ever practis'd) by *imposing upon the People with their Authority and Sophistry*, and under pretence of *instructing, dexterously detaining them in the grossest Ignorance.*

26. But the Scope of the *Apostles* was very different: Piety towards God, and the Peace of Mankind, was their Gain, and *Christ* and his *Gospel* their Glory; they came not magnifying nor exalting themselves; not imposing but declaring their Doctrine: they did not confound and mislead, but convince the Mind; they were employ'd to dispel Ignorance, to eradicate Superstition, to propagate Truth, and Reformation of Manners; *to preach Deliverance to Captives, (i. e.) the Enjoyment of Christian Liberty to the Slaves of the Levitical, and Pagan Priesthoods; and to declare Salvation to repenting Sinners.*

Luk. 4. 18.

27. I shall add here some of the *Ch. 3.*  
 Characters which *David* gives of the Law and Word of God, that we may admit nothing as the Will of Heaven but what is agreeable to them: *The Law of the Lord, says he, is perfect, converting the Soul. The Testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the Simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the Heart. The Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes. The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The Judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I understand more than the Antients, because I keep thy Precepts. Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Path. The New Testament is so full of this Language, and the Contents of it are every where so conformable to it, that I shall refer the Reader to the particular Discussion of the Whole in the second Discourse. But I must remark in the mean time that not a Syllable of this Language is true, if any Contradictions seeming or real be admitted in Scripture. As much*

Sect. II. may be said of *Mysteries*; but we shall  
 talk of that by and by.

## C H A P. IV.

### Objections answer'd, drawn from the Pravity of Humane REA- SON.

28. **T**Here remains one Objection yet, upon which some lay a mighty Stress, tho it's like to do them little Service. Granting, say they, the GOSPEL to be as reasonable as you pretend, yet *corrupt and deprav'd Reason can neither discern nor receive Divine Verities*. Ay, but that proves not Divine Verities to be contrary to *sound Reason*. But they maintain that *no Man's Reason is sound*. Wherefore I hope so to state this Question, as to cut off all Occasion of Dispute from judicious and peaceable Men. Reason taken for the Principle of Discourse in us, or more particularly for *that Faculty every one has of judging of his Ideas*

*Ideas according to their Agreement or Ch. 4.  
Disagreement, and so of loving what  
seems good unto him, and hating what  
he thinks evil: Reason, I say, in this* ~~~~~  
*Sense is whole and entire in every one  
whose Organs are not accidentally in-  
dispos'd. 'Tis from it that we are  
accounted Men; and we could neither  
inform others, nor receive Improve-  
ment our selves, any more than Brutes,  
without it.*

29. But if by *Reason* be understood  
a constant right Use of these Facul-  
ties, viz. *If a Man never judges but  
according to clear Perceptions, desires no-  
thing but what is truly good for him, nor  
avoids but what is certainly evil: Then,*  
*I confess, it is extreamly corrupt. We  
are too prone to frame wrong Con-  
ceptions, and as erroneous Judgments  
of things. We generally covet what  
flatters our Senses, without distin-  
guishing noxious from innocent Plea-  
sures; and our Hatred is as partial.*  
*We gratify our Bodies so much as to  
meditate little, and think very grossly  
of spiritual, or abstracted Matters. We  
are apt to indulge our Inclinations,  
which we term to follow Nature: so 1 Cor. 2. 14.  
that*

- Sect. II. that the † *natural Man*, that is, he that gives the swing to his Appetites, counts Divine Things mere Folly, calls Religion a feverish Dream of superstitious Heads, or a politick Trick invented by States-men to awe the credulous Vulgar. For as *they that walk after the Flesh mind the things thereof*, so their carnal Wisdom is Enmity against God.
- Rom. 8. *Sin easily besets us. There is a Law in our*
5. 7. *Members or Body, warring against the Law of our Minds or Reason. And when we would do Good, Evil is present with us. If thus we become stupid and unfit for earthly Speculations, how shall we believe*
- Heb. 12. 1. *when we are told of heavenly things?*
- Rom. 7. 23. *when we are told of heavenly things?*
- Ver. 21. *when we are told of heavenly things?*
- Joh. 3. 12. *when we are told of heavenly things?*

30. But these Disorders are so far from being Reason, that nothing can be more directly contrary to it. We lie under no necessary Fate of sinning. There is no Defect in our Understandings but those of our own Creation, that is to say, *vicious Habits easily contracted, but difficultly reform'd*. 'Tis just with us as with the Drunkard, whose

---

† *Psycho* constantly signifies the animal, and never the natural State of Man. It should be in this Place translated sensual, as it is very rightly, Jam. 3. 15. and Jude, v. 19.



whose *I cannot give over Drinking* is a Ch. 4.  
 deliberate *I will not*. For upon a Wa-  
 ger, or for a Reward, he can forbear  
 his Cups a Day, a Month, a Year, ac-  
 cording as the Consideration of the  
 Value or Certainty of the expected  
 Gain do's influence him. *Let no Man* Jam. I. 13,  
*therefore say when he is tempted, I am* 14.  
*tempted of God; for as God cannot be*  
*tempted to Evil, so neither tempteth he*  
*any Man: But every Man is tempted*  
*when he is drawn away, and entic'd of his*  
*own Lust.*

31. Supposing a natural Impotency  
 to reason well, we could no more be  
 liable to Condemnation for not keep-  
 ing the Commands of God, than those  
 to whom *the Gospel* was never reveal-  
 ed for not believing on *Christ*: For Rom. 10,  
*how shall they call on him in whom they* 14.  
*have not believ'd? and how shall they be-*  
*lieve in him of whom they have not heard?*  
 Were our reasoning Faculties imper-  
 fect, or we not capable to employ  
 them rightly, there could be no Possi-  
 bility of our understanding one ano-  
 ther in Millions of things, where the  
 stock of our Ideas should prove un-  
 avoidably unequal, or our Capacities  
 different.

Sect. II. different. But 'tis the Perfection of our Reason and Liberty that makes us deserve Rewards and Punishments. We are perswaded that *all our Thoughts are entirely free, we can expend the Force of Words, compare Ideas, distinguish clear from obscure Conceptions, suspend our Judgments about Uncertainties, and yield only to Evidence.* In a word, the Deliberations we use about our Designs, and the Choice to which we determine our selves at last, do prove us the free Disposers of all our Actions. Now what is *sound Reason* except this be it? Doubtless it is. And no *Evangelical*, or other knowable Truth can prove insuperable, or monstrous to him that uses it after this manner. But when we abuse it against it self, and enslave it to our debauch'd Imaginations, it is averse from all Good. We are so habituated, I confess, to precarious and hasty Conclusions, that without great Constancy and Exercise we cannot recover our innate Freedom, *nor do well, having accustom'd our selves so much to Evil.* But tho' tis said in Scripture, that we *will neither know nor understand*; 'tis there also said, that we may

Jer. 13. 23.

may amend our Ways, turn from our Ch. 4.  
*Iniquity, and choose Life.* Encourage-  
 ments are propos'd to such as do so.  
 We can, upon serious Reflection, see  
 our Faults, and find that what we  
 held most unreasonable, did only ap-  
 pear so from *superficial Disquisitions,*  
 or want of necessary Helps; from *Defe-*  
*rence to Authority, and Principles taken*  
*upon Trust;* from *irregular Inclinations*  
 and *Self-interest, or the Hatred of a Party.*


32. But notwithstanding all this,  
 some are at a world of Pains to rob  
 themselves (if they could) of their  
*Liberty or Freewill,* the noblest and most  
 useful of all our Faculties, the only  
 thing we can properly call ours, and the  
 only thing that neither Power nor For-  
 tune can take from us. Under whatever  
 Vail these Men endeavour to hide  
 their Folly, yet they are engag'd in it  
 by extreme *Pride and Self-love:* For,  
*not willing to own their Ignorance and*  
*Miscarriages, (which proceed from Pas-*  
*sion, Sloth, or Inconsideration) they would*  
*remove all the Blame from their Will,*  
*and charge it upon a natural Impotency*  
*not in their Power to cure.* Thus they  
 ingeniously cheat themselves, and  
 chuse

Sect. II. chuse rather to be rank'd in the same Condition with Brutes or Machines, than be oblig'd to acknowledg their humane Frailties, and to mend.

33. Since therefore the Perfection or Soundness of our Reason is so evident to our selves, and so plainly contain'd in *Scripture*, however wrested by some ignorant Persons, *we should labour to acquire Knowledge with more confident Hopes of Success.* Why should we entertain such mean and unbecoming Thoughts, as if Truth, like the Almighty, dwelt in Light inaccessible, and not to be discover'd by the Sons of Men? Things are always the same, how different soever the Conceptions of Men about them may be; and what another did not, I may happily find out. That nothing escap'd the Sight of former Ages is a Tale to be told where one Person only speaks, and no Body present must contradict him. The Slips and Errors which are taken notice of in the World every Day, serve only to put us in mind that many able Men did not examine the Truth with that Order and Application they should or might have done.

There

Lx

There are a thousand things in our Ch. 4.  
 Power to know, of which, through   
 Prejudice or Neglect, we may be, and  
 frequently remain ignorant all our  
 Lives; and innumerable Difficulties  
 may be made by imagining MYSTE-  
 RIES where there are none, or by  
 conceiving too discouraging and unjust  
 an Opinion of our own Abilities:  
 whereas, by a Parity of Reason, we  
 may hope to outdo all that outdid  
 others before us, as Posterity may ex-  
 ceed both. 'Tis no Presumption there-  
 fore for us to endeavour setting things in  
 a better Light; as to know what we  
 are able to perform is not Pride, but  
 foolishly to presume none else can e-  
 qual us, when we are all upon the  
 same Level: For who maketh thee to 1 Cor. 4. 7.  
 differ from another? And what hast thou  
 that thou didst not receive? Now if thou  
 didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if  
 thou hadst not receiv'd it? Have we  
 not all the same sure and certain Pro-  
 mises of Light and Assistance from  
 above, as well as the Privilege of Rea-  
 son in common? If any lack Wisdom,  
 let him ask it of God, who gives to all Jam. 1. 5.  
 Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it  
 shall be given him.

34. To

Sect. II.

34. To conclude, let no Body think to be excus'd by this imaginary *Corruption*, but learn from the *Scripture*, our infallible Oracle, that the *Gospel*, if it be the Word of God, is only contrary to the Opinions and Wishes of  
 2 Pet. 3. 3. lewd Men, *that love to walk after their own Lusts; of those that speak Evil of the things which they understand not, and*  
 Jude, v. 10. *debauch themselves in what they know in common with Brutes. It is hid to them*  
 2 Cor. 4. *whose Minds are blinded by the God of*  
 3. 4. *this World; and to those who live by the Ignorance and simple Credulity of their Brethren. To be brief, It is contrary to the false Reasoning of all that will not know what it is to reflect or consider; But it is not above the Possibility of their Reason when they shall better improve their Faculties. The Creation of the World was against the System of Aristotle, the Immortality of the Soul against the Hypothesis of Epicurus, and the || Liberty of*

---

|| *How the absolute Liberty we experience in our selves, is consistent with God's Omnipotency and our Dependence on him, shall in due Place be consider'd.*

of the Will was impugn'd by many Ch. 4.  
antient *Philosophers*. But is this to be  
contrary to *Reason*? Have not these  
Men been quite baffl'd by as very  
*Heathens* as themselves? And are not  
their other Errors since detected and  
exploded by most of the Learned?  
Besides, they wanted a principal mean  
of *Information*, viz. *REVELATION*.

---

F SECT.




## SECT. III.

*That there is nothing MY-  
STERIOUS, or A-  
BOVE Reason in the  
GOSPEL.*

1. **W**E come at length to en-  
quire *whether any Do-  
ctrine of the GOSPEL*  
*be ABOVE, tho not contrary to REA-  
SON.* This Expression is taken in a  
twofold Signification. First, It de-  
notes a thing intelligible of it self, but  
so cover'd by figurative Words, Types  
and Ceremonies, that *Reason* cannot  
penetrate the Vail, nor see what is  
under it till it be remov'd. Secondly,  
It is made to signify a thing of its own  
Nature inconceivable, and not to be  
judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties  
and Ideas, tho it be never so clearly  
reveal'd. In both these Senses *to be*  
*above*



*above Reason* is the same thing with Ch. 1. MYSTERY; and, in effect, they  are convertible Terms in *Divinity*.

## CHAP. I.

### The History and Signification of MYSTERY in the Writings of the GENTILES.

2. **W**HAT is meant by REASON we have already largely discours'd; but to understand aright what the word MYSTERY imports, we must trace the Original of it as far back as the Theology of the antient *Gentiles*, whereof it was a considerable Term. *Those Nations, who* (as Paul elegantly describes them) *professing themselves wise, became Fools*; Rom. 1. 22, 23, 25. *who chang'd the Glory of the incorruptible God into the Image and Likeness of corruptible Man, of Birds, of Beasts, and creeping things; who turn'd the Truth of God into a Lie, and worship'd the Creature as well as (and sometimes more than) the Creator: Those Nations, I*  
F 2 say,

Sect. 3. say, asham'd or afraid to exhibit their *Religion* naked to the view of all indifferently, disguis'd it with various Ceremonies, Sacrifices, Plays, &c. making the superstitious People believe that admirable things were adumbrated by these Externals. The *Priests*, but very rarely, and then obscurely, taught in publick, pretending the Injunctions of their *Divinities* to the contrary, lest their Secrets, forsooth, should be expos'd to the Profanation of the Ignorant, or Violation of the Impious. They perform'd the highest Acts of their Worship, consisting of ridiculous, obscene, or inhumane Rites, in the inmost Recesses of *Temples* or *Groves* consecrated for that purpose: And it was inexpressible Sacrilege for any to \* enter these but such as had a special Mark and Privilege, or as much as to ask Questions about what pass'd in them. All the Excluded were for that Reason stil'd *the PROFANE*, as those not in Orders with us *the LAITY*.

3. But

---

\* ——— Procul, O procul este Profani!  
 Conclamat vates, totoq; absistite luco. *Virg. l. 6.*  
*Ætid. v. 259.* Callimach. Hymn. in Apol. v. 2.  
*Εἰς τὰς εἰς τὰς ἈΜΙΤΕΣ.*

3. But the cunning Priests, who Ch. i.  
 knew how to turn every thing to their  
 own Advantage, thought fit to *initiate*  
 or instruct certain Persons in the Mean-  
 ing of their Rites. They gave out that  
 such as died *uninitiated* \* wallow'd in  
 infernal Mire, whilst the Purifi'd and  
*Initiated* dwelt with the Gods; which  
 as well increas'd their Veneration for,  
 as a Desire of enjoying, so great a Hap-  
 piness. The *Initiated*, after some Years  
 Preparation to make them value what  
 cost so much Time and Patience, were  
 devoutly sworn † never to discover  
 what they saw or heard under Pain of  
 || Death, tho they might discourse of  
 them amongst themselves, lest too  
 F 3 great

\* "Ὅς ἀμυήτῃ καὶ ἀτέλεστος εἰς ἄδ' ἀφίκεται, ἐν  
 βορβόρῳ κείσεται. Ὁ δὲ κατεδραμένῃ τῇ καὶ τετι-  
 λεσμένῃ, ἐκείνῃ ἀφικόμενῃ, μετὰ θῶν ὀκνησεῖ.  
 Plat. in Phædon. pag. 69. Edit. Paris. 1578. Τελετῆς  
 οἱ μετεχόντες, ἀπὸ τῆς τῆς βίης τελευτῆς, καὶ τῆς σύμ-  
 παντῇ αἰωνῇ, ἡδύς τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουσιν. Isocrat.  
 in Panegy. Initiæ; ut appellatur, ita re vera prin-  
 cipia vitæ cognovimus: neq; solum cum lætitia vi-  
 vendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore  
 moriendi. Cic. l. 2. de Leg. c. 14.

† Quis Cereris ritus audet vulgare Profanis?

Magnaque Threicio sacra reperta Samo? Ovid.  
 l. 2. de Arte Amand. v. 601. Ὡς κακῶς ἐξορμασάμενοι τὰ  
 μυστήρια, ὃ τὰ ἀφ' αὐτῶν φήσαντες. Aristid.

|| Νόμῳ, ‡ ἐξεκπύοντα τὰ μυστήρια τιθέντας. Soli-  
 pater in Divis. Quæst.

Sect. 3. great a Constraint should tempt them  
 W to blab the Secret. And so religiously  
 they kept this Oath, that some of them,  
 after their Conversion to *Christianity*,  
 could hardly be brought to declare  
 what pass'd at their *Initiation* in *Gen-  
 tilism*. The *Athenians* thought no  
 Torments exquisite enough to punish  
 \* *Diagoras* the Philosopher, for divul-  
 ging their *Mysteries*; and not content  
 to brand him with *Atheism* for laugh-  
 ing at their Weakness, they promis'd  
 a Talent as a Reward to any that  
 should kill him. 'Twas Death to say  
*Adonis* was a Man; some suffer'd up-  
 on that account: And many were torn  
 in pieces at the † *Mysteries* of *Ceres*,  
 and the || *Orgies* of *Bacchus*, for their  
 unadvis'd Curiosity.

4. Cre-

---

\* *Ἦν ἀποκτείνῃ τις ὑμῶν Διατρέων τὸν μῆλον, λαμβάνειν τέλειον.* Aristophanes in *Avibus*; etiam *Suidas* in voce.

† *Acarnanes* duo *Juvenes* per *Initiorum* dies non *Initiati* *Templum Cereris*, imprudentes *Religionis*, cum cetera turba ingressi sunt. Facile eos *Sermo* prodidit, absurde quædam percunctantes: Deductiq; ad *Antistites Templi*, quum palam esset per errorem ingressos, tanquam ob infandum scelus interfecti sunt. *Livius*, lib. 31. cap. 14.

|| Witness the Story of *Pentheus*, which afforded the Subject of a Tragedy to *Euripides*.

4. Credible Authors report, that the Ch. 1. Priests confess'd to the *Initiated* how these Myftick Representations were instituted at first in Commemoration of some remarkable Accidents, or to the Honour of some great Persons that oblig'd the World by their Vertues and useful Inventions to pay them such Acknowledgments. But let this be as it will, *Myein* in their Systems signify'd to initiate: *Myesis*, Initiation: *Mystes*, a Name afterwards given the Priests, denoted the Person to be initiated, who was call'd an \* *Epoet* when admitted; and *Mystery* the Doctrine in which he was initiated, As there were several † Degrees, so there were different sorts of *Mysteries*. The most famous were the *Samothracian*, the *Eleusinian*, the *Egyptian*, and those of *Bacchus*, commonly known by the name of || *Orgies* ;

Μυεῖν.  
Μυήσις.  
Μύστης.  
Μυστήριον.

F 4

tho

\* 'Οι τὰ μυστήρια παραλαμβάνοντες, λέγονται ἐν ἀρχῇ μὴ μετὰ ἐνιαυτὸν ὃ ἐπὶ πέπται καὶ ἔφορος.  
Scholiast. in Aristophanis *Ranas*.

† Ἐστὶ τὰ μικρὰ [μυστήρια] ὥσπερ περὶ ἁδασίς καὶ περὶ ἀγνεύσις τῶν μεγάλων. Schol. in Plut. Aristophan.  
Aët. 4. Sc. 2.

|| Pars obscura cavis celebrabant Orgia cistis,

Orgia quæ frustra cupiunt audire Profani.

Cat. *Epigram*. 64. v. 260.

Sect. 3. tho the word is sometimes put for any  
 of the former.

5. From what has been said it is clear, that they understood by *Mystery* in those Days *a thing intelligible of it self, but so veil'd by others, that it could not be known without special Revelation.* I need not add, that in all the Greek and Roman Authors it is constantly put, as a very vulgar Expression, for any thing sacred or profane that is design'dly kept secret, or accidentally obscure. And this is the common Acceptation of it still: for when we cannot see clearly into a Business, we say it is a *Mystery* to us; and that an obscure or perplex'd Discourse is very *mysterious*. *Mysteries* of State, Sciences and Trades, run all in the same Notion.

6. But many not denying what is so plain, yet being strongly inclin'd out of Ignorance or Passion to maintain what was first introduc'd by the Craft or Superstition of their Fore-fathers, will have some *Christian Doctrines* to be still *mysterious* in the second Sense of the Word, that is, *inconceivable in themselves, however clearly reveal'd.* They think

think a long Prescription will argue it Ch. 1.  
Folly in any to appear against them, and indeed Custom has made it dangerous. But, slighting so mean Considerations, if I can demonstrate that in the New Testament *Mystery* is always us'd in the first Sense of the Word, or that of the *Gentiles, viz. for things naturally very intelligible, but so cover'd by figurative Words or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation*; and that the Vail is actually taken away; then it will manifestly follow that the Doctrines so reveal'd cannot now be properly call'd *Mysteries*.

7. This is what I hope to perform in the Sequel of this Section, to the entire Satisfaction of those sincere Christians more concern'd for the Truth than the old or gainful Opinion. Yet I must first remove out of my way certain *common places of cavilling*, with which, not only the raw Beginners of the most implicate Constitution raise a great Dust upon all Occasions, tho' not able to speak of any thing pertinently when jostl'd out of the beaten Road; but truly their venerable Teachers are not ashamed sometimes to play at this small Game,

**Sect. 3.** Game, which, they know, rather amuses the Prejudic'd of their own side, than edifies the Adversaries of any sort. I wish there were more even of a well-meaning Zeal without Knowledge, than of Art or Cunning in this Conduct.


---

## CHAP. II.

*That nothing ought to be call'd a MYSTERY, because we have not an adequate Idea of all its Properties, nor any at all of its Essence.*

8. **I** Shall discuss this Point with all the Perspicuity I am able. And, first, I affirm, *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, or a distinct View of all its Properties at once; for then every thing would be a Mystery.* The Knowledge of finite Creatures is gradually progressive, as Objects are presented to the Understanding. *Adam* did



did not know so much in the twentieth Ch. 2.  
as in the hundredth Year of his Age;   
and *Jesus Christ* is expressly recorded to  
have *increas'd in Wisdom as well as in* Luk. 2.52.

*Stature.* We are said to know a thousand things, nor can we doubt of it; yet we never have a full Conception of whatever belongs to them. I understand nothing better than this *Table* upon which I am now writing: I conceive it divisible into Parts beyond all Imagination; but shall I say it is *above my Reason* because I cannot count these Parts, nor distinctly perceive their Quantity and Figures? I am convinc'd that *Plants* have a regular Contexture, and a Multitude of Vessels, many of them equivalent or analogous to those of *Animals*, whereby they receive a Juice from the Earth, and prepare it, changing some into their own Substance, and evacuating the excrementitious Parts. But I do not clearly comprehend how all these Operations are perform'd, tho I know very well what is meant by a *Tree*.

9. The Reason is, because *knowing nothing of Bodies but their Properties, God has wisely provided we should understand*

Sect. 3. *stand no more of these than are useful and necessary for us*; which is all our present Condition needs. Thus our Eyes are not given us to see all Quantities, nor perhaps any thing as it is in it self, but as it bears some Relation to us. What is too minute, as it escapes our Sight, so it can neither harm nor benefit us: and we have a better View of Bodies the nearer we approach them, because then they become more convenient or inconvenient; but as we remove farther off, we lose their Sight with their Influence. I'm perswaded there's no Motion which does not excite some Sound in Ears dispos'd to be affected with proportionable Degrees of Force from the Air; and, it may be, the small Animals concern'd can hear the Steps of the *Spider*, as we do those of Men and Cattel. From these and Millions of other Instances it is manifest, that we have little Certainty of any thing but as it is noxious or beneficial to us.

10. Rightly speaking then, we are accounted to *comprehend* any thing when its chief Properties and their several Uses are known to us: for

to

\* *to comprehend* in all correct Authors Ch. 2. is nothing else but *to know*; and as of *what is not knowable we can have no Idea, so it is nothing to us.* It is improper therefore to say a thing is above our Reason, because we know no more of it than concerns us, and ridiculous to supersede our Disquisitions about it upon that score. What should we think of a Man that would stily maintain *Water* to be above his Reason, and that he would never enquire into its Nature, nor employ it in his House or Grounds, because he knows not how many Particles go to a Drop; whether the Air passes through it, is incorporated with it, or neither? This is for all the World as if I would not go because I cannot fly. Now seeing *the Denominations of things are borrow'd from their known Properties*, and that *no Properties are knowable but what concern us, or serve to discover such as do*, we cannot be accountable for comprehending no other, nor justly requir'd more

---

\* Ἐγὼ δὲ ἔτ' ἄλλο πὶ χαταλεπτὸν ἡγνῆσαι σημαίνει  
 πρὸς τὸ γνῶσθαι, ἔτ' ἄλλο πὶ χαταλαμβάνειν ὅτι  
 βεβαίως γινώσκουσιν. Γαλην\* πρὸς αὐτοὺς. διδασκαλ.

Sect. 3. more by reasonable Men, much less  
 by the all-wise DEITY.

11. The most compendious Method therefore to acquire sure and useful Knowledg, is *not to trouble our selves nor others with what is useles, were it known; or what is impossible to be known at all.* Since I easily perceive the good or bad Effects of Rain upon the Earth, what should I be the better did I comprehend its Generation in the Clouds? for after all I could make no Rain at my Pleasure, nor prevent its falling at any time. A probable *Hypothesis* will not give Satisfaction in such Cases: The Hands, for Example, of two Clock-Dials may have the same external Motion, tho the Disposition of the latent Springs which produce it should be very different. And to affirm this or that to be the Way, will not do, unless you can demonstrate that no other possible Way remains. Nay, should you hit upon the real Manner, you can never be sure of it, because the Evidence of Matters of Fact solely depends upon Testimony: And it follows not that *such a thing is so, because it may be so.*

12. The

12. The Application of this Dis-Ch. 2.  
course to my Subject admits of no Difficulty; and it is, first, That *no Christian Doctrine, no more than any ordinary Piece of Nature, can be reputed a Mystery, because we have not an adequate or compleat Idea of whatever belongs to it.* Secondly, That *what is reveal'd in Religion, as it is most useful and necessary, so it must and may be as easily comprehended, and found as consistent with our common Notions, as what we know of Wood or Stone, of Air, of Water, or the like.* And, Thirdly, That *when we do as familiarly explain such Doctrines, as what is known of natural things, (which I pretend we can) we may then be as properly said to comprehend the one as the other.*

13. They trifle then exceedingly, and discover a mighty Scarcity of better Arguments, who defend their *Mysteries* by this pitiful Shift of drawing Inferences from what is unknown to what is known, or of insisting upon adequate Ideas; except they will agree, as some do, to call every Spire of Grass, Sitting and Standing, Fish or Flesh, profound *Mysteries*. And if out of a pertinacious or worse

Sect. 3. worse Humour they will be still fooling, and call these things *Mysteries*, I'm willing to admit as many as they please in *Religion*, if they will allow me likewise to make mine as intelligible to others as these are to me.

14. But to finish this Point, I conclude, that neither GOD himself, nor any of his Attributes, are *Mysteries* to us for want of an adequate Idea: No, not *Eternity*. The *mysterious Wits* do never more expose themselves than when they treat of *Eternity* in particular. Then they think themselves in their impregnable Fortrefs, and strangely insult over those dull Creatures that cannot find a thing where it is not. For if any Bounds (as Beginning or End) could be assign'd to *Eternity*, it ceases immediately to be what it should; and you frame only a finite, or rather a *negative Idea*, which is the Nature of all Limitation. Nor can it be said, that therefore *Eternity* is above Reason in this Respect, or that it is any Defect in us not to exhaust its Idea; for what greater Perfection can be ascrib'd to Reason than to know precisely the Nature of things? And does

does not all its Errors lie in attribut- Ch. 2.  
ing those Properties to a thing which it  
has not, or taking any away that it  
contains? *Eternity* therefore is no more  
above Reason *because it cannot be ima-*  
*gin'd*, than a Circle, *because it may*;  
for in both Cases Reason performs its  
Part according to the different Natures  
of the Objects, whereof the one is  
essentially imaginable, the other not.

15. Now it appears that the preten-  
ded *Mysteriousness* of *Eternity* do's not  
consist in the want of an adequate No-  
tion, which is all that we consider in  
it at present. The Difficulties rais'd  
from its Duration, as, that *Succession*  
*seems to make it finite*, and that *all*  
*things must exist together if it be instan-*  
*taneous*, I despair not of solving very  
easily; and rendring *Infinity* also  
(which is inseparable from it, or rather  
a different Consideration of the same  
thing) as little *mysterious* as that *three*  
*and two make five*. But this falls natu-  
rally into my *second Discourse*, where I  
give a particular Explication of the  
*Christian* Tenets, according to the  
general Principles I am establishing in  
this.

- Sect. 3. 16. As we know not all the Properties of things, so we can never conceive the *Essence* of any Substance in the World. To avoid Ambiguity, I distinguish, after an excellent modern Philosopher, the *Nominal* from the *Real Essence* of a thing. *The nominal Essence is a Collection of those Properties or Modes which we principally observe in any thing, and to which we give one common Denomination or Name.* Thus the *nominal Essence* of the *Sun* is a bright, hot, and round Body, at a certain Distance from us, and that has a constant regular Motion. Whoever hears the Word *Sun* pronounc'd, this is the Idea he has of it. He may conceive more of its Properties, or not all these; but it is still a Collection of Modes or Properties that makes his Idea. So the *Nominal Essence* of *Honey* consists in its Colour, Taste, and other known Attributes.

17. But the *real Essence* is that *intrinsic Constitution of a thing which is the Ground or Support of all its Properties, and from which they naturally flow or result.* Now tho we are persuaded that the Modes of things must have



have such a Subject to exist in, (for Ch. 2. they cannot subsist alone) yet we are absolutely ignorant of what it is. We conceive nothing more distinctly than the mention'd Properties of the Sun, and those whereby Plants, Fruits, Metals, &c. are known to us; but we have no manner of Notion of the several Foundations of these Properties, tho we are very sure in the mean time, that some such thing must necessarily be. The observable Qualities therefore of things is all that we understand by their Names, for which Reason they are call'd their *Nominal Essence*.

18. It follows now very plainly, that *nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we are ignorant of its real Essence, since it is not more knowable in one thing than in another, and is never conceiv'd or included in the Ideas we have of things, or the Names we give 'em*. I had not much insisted upon this Point, were it not for the so often repeated Sophistry of some that rather merit the Encomiums of great READERS than great REASONERS. When they would have the most palpable

G 2

Abfur-

Sect. 3. Absurdities and Contradictions go down with others, or make them place Religion in Words that signify nothing, or what they are not able to explain, then they wisely tell them, that they are ignorant of many things, especially the *Essence* of their own Souls; and that therefore they must not always deny what they cannot conceive. But this is not all; for when they would (instead of confuting them) make those pass for ridiculous or arrogant Pretenders, who maintain that *only intelligible and possible things are the Subject of Belief*, they industriously represent them as presuming to define the *Essence* of God with that of created Spirits. And after they have sufficiently aggravated this Presumption of their own coining, they conclude, that if the Contexture of the smallest Pebble is not to be accounted for, then they should not insist upon such rigorous Terms of Believing, but sometimes be content to submit their Reason to their Teachers, and the Determinations of the Church.


19. Who perceives not the Weakness and Slight of this Reasoning?

We

We certainly know as much of the *SOUL* as we do of any thing else, if not more. We form the clearest Conceptions of Thinking, Knowing, Imagining, Willing, Hoping, Loving, and the like Operations of the Mind. But we are Strangers to the *Subject* wherein these Operations exist. So are we to that upon which the Roundness, Softness, Colour, and Taste of a Grape depend. There is nothing more evident than the Modes or Properties of *BODY*, as to be extended, solid, divisible, smooth, rough, soft, hard, &c. But we know as little of the internal Constitution, which is the Support of these sensible Qualities, as we do of that wherein the Operations of the *SOUL* reside. And, as the great Man I just now mention'd observes, *we may as well deny the Existence of Body, because we have not an Idea of its real Essence, as call the Being of the Soul in question for the same Reason.* The Idea of the Soul then is every whit as clear and distinct as that of the *Body*; and had there been (as there is not) any Difference, the *Soul* must have carri'd the Advantage,

Sect. 3. tage, because its Properties are more immediately known to us, and are the Light whereby we discover all things besides.

20. As for *GOD*, we comprehend nothing better than his Attributes. We know not, it's true, the Nature of that eternal *Subject* or *Essence* wherein Infinite Goodness, Love, Knowledge, Power and Wisdom co-exist; but we are not better acquainted with the *real Essence* of any of his Creatures. As by the Idea and Name of *GOD* we understand his known Attributes and Properties, so we understand those of all things else by theirs; and we conceive the one as clearly as we do the other. I remark'd in the Beginning of this Chapter, that we knew nothing of things, but such of their Properties as were *necessary* and *useful*. We may say the same of *God*; for every Act of our Religion is directed by the Consideration of some of his Attributes, without ever thinking of his *Essence*. Our Love to him is kindled by his Goodness, and our Thankfulness by his Mercy; our Obedience is regulated by his Justice; and our  
Hopes

Hopes are confirm'd by his Wisdom Ch. 2.  
and Power. 

21. I think I may now warrantably conclude, that nothing is a *Mystery*, because we know not its *Essence*, since it appears that it is neither knowable in it self, nor ever thought of by us: So that the *Divine Being* himself cannot with more Reason be accounted *mysterious* in this Respect than the most contemptible of his Creatures. Nor am I very much concern'd that these *Essences* escape my Knowledg: for I am fix'd in the Opinion, that *what Infinite Goodness has not been pleas'd to reveal to us, we are either sufficiently capable to discover our selves, or need not understand it at all*. I hope now it is very manifest that *Mysteries in Religion* are but ill argu'd from the pretended *Mysteries of Nature*; and that such as endeavour to support the former by the latter, have either a Design to impose upon others, or that they have never themselves duely consider'd of this Matter,

## C H A P. III.

*The Signification of the Word MYSTERY in the New Testament, and the Writings of the most ancient Christians.*

22. **H**AVING so dispatch'd these *adequate Ideas*, and, I know not what, *real Essences*, we come now to the main Point upon which the whole Controversy chiefly depends. For the Question being, *whether or no Christianity is mysterious*, it ought to be naturally decided by the *New Testament*, wherein the *Christian Faith* is originally contain'd. I heartily desire to put the Case upon this Issue, I appeal to this Tribunal: For did I not infinitely prefer the Truth I learn from these sacred Records to all other Considerations, I should never assert that *there are no Mysteries in Christianity*. The *Scriptures* have engag'd me in this Error, if it be one; and I will sooner be reputed Heterodox with these only  
on

on my side, than to pass for Orthodox Ch. 3.  
with the whole World, and have them  
against me. ~~~~~

23. Now by searching the *Scriptures*  
I find some of the Evangelick Do-  
ctrines call'd *Mysteries*, in a more ge-  
neral, or in a more particular Sense.  
They are more generally so call'd with  
respect to all Mankind: for being cer-  
tain Matters of Fact only known to  
God, and lodg'd in his Decree, or such  
Events as were quite lost and forgot  
in the World, it was impossible for  
any Person, tho never so wise or learn-  
ed, to discover them; for *the things*  
*of God knoweth none but the Spirit of* <sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup>  
*God*, as none can find out the secret <sup>11.</sup>  
Thoughts of Man till he tells them  
himself. Such Revelations then of  
God in the *New Testament* are call'd  
*Mysteries*, not from any present Incon-  
ceivableness or Obscurity, but with  
respect to what they were before this  
*Revelation*, as that is call'd our Task  
which we long since perform'd.

24. If any should question this, let  
him hear the Apostle *Paul* declare  
for himself and his Fellow-Labourers  
in the Gospel: *We speak*, says he, *the*  
*Wisdom*

**SECT. 3.** *Wisdom of God hid in a MYSTERY, which God ordain'd before the World for our Glory, which none of the Princes of the World knew, &c.* And, to shew that this Divine Wisdom was a Mystery for want of revealing Information, **1 Cor. 2. 7, 8.** *He presently subjoins, Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard; neither have entered into the Heart of Man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him; but God hath reveal'd them to us by his Spirit.* The most perspicacious Philosophers were not able to foretel the Coming of Christ, to discover the Resurrection of the Body, nor any other Matter of Fact that is deliver'd in the Gospel: And if they happen'd now and then to say something like the Truth, they did but divine at best, and could never be certain of their Opinion. It is a most delightful thing to consider what Pains the enquiring Heathens were often at to give a Reason for what depended not in the least upon any Principles in their Philosophy, but was an historical Fact communicable by God alone, or such as had undoubted Memoirs concerning it. Of this I think it not amiss to add the following Example.



25. The same Experience that Ch. 3. taught the *Gentiles* their mortal Condition, acquainted them also with the Frailty of their Natures, and the numberless Calamities constantly attending them. They could not perswade themselves that the Species of Man came in such deplorable Circumstances out of the Hands of an infinitely good and merciful Deity; and so were inclin'd to impute all to the Wickedness of adult Persons, till they perceiv'd that Death and Misfortune did not spare innocent Children more than Robbers and Pirates. At last they imagin'd a *pre-existent State*, wherein the Soul acting separately like Angels, might have contracted some extraordinary Guilt, and so for Punishment be thrust into the Body, which they sometimes compar'd to a Prison, but oftner to a \* Grave. This was likewise the Origin of *Transmigration*, tho in process of Time the Sins of this World became as much concern'd in that Opinion as those of the other. But nothing is more ingenious than the  
Ac-

---

\* As if Σῶμα had been a Corruption of Σῆμα.

Sect. 3. Account which *Cebes* the *Theban* gives us of the Matter in his most excellent *Portraiture of humane Life*. He feigns \* *Imposture* sitting in a Throne at the Gate of Life, in the Shape of a most beautiful Lady, holding a Cup in her Hand: She obligingly presents it to all that are on their Journey to this World, and these as civilly accept it; but the Draught proves *Ignorance* and *Error*, whence proceed all the Disorders and Misery of their Lives,

26. This Point was a great *Mystery* to these honest Philosophers, who had only Fancy to guide them, and could not pretend to Instructions from the *Mind of God*; but the thing is now no *Mystery* to us that have the *Mind of Christ*. We know that *Adam* the first Man became also the first Sinner, and Mortal; and that so the whole Race propagated from him could be naturally no better than he was: By one Rom. 5. 12. *Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin.*

27. But

\* Ὁρεῖς, εἶπε, πρὸς τὴν πύλιν θρόνον πνὰ καί-  
μενον—ἐφ' ἧς καὶ θηταὶ γυνὴ πεπλασμένη τῇ ἡθείᾳ, καὶ πν-  
δαυὴ φαινόμενη, &c. *Cebet. Tab. p. 11. Ed. Amst. 1689.*

27. But some Doctrines of the Gospel are more particularly call'd *Mysteries*, because they were hid from God's peculiar People under the *Mosaick Oeconomy*; not that they knew nothing concerning them, for *the Law had a* Heb. 10. 1. *Shadow of good things to come*; but they were not clearly and fully reveal'd till the *New Testament Times*, being vail'd before by various Typical Representations, Ceremonies, and figurative Expressions. Christ tells his Disciples, *Many Prophets and Kings have desir'd* Luke 10. *to see those things which you see, and* 24. *have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* Paul says, *we use great* 2 Cor. 3. **PLAINNESS** *of Speech, and* 12, 13. *not as Moses who put a VAIL over his Face*: And then expressly adds, that *this VAIL is taken away in* Ver. 14. *Christ*, which could not be truly affirm'd, were the things reveal'd still inconceivable; for *I know no Difference between not hearing of a thing at all, and not comprehending it when you do.* In another Place Paul has these remarkable Words; *The Preaching of Jesus* Rom. 16. *Christ according to the REVELATION* 25, 26.   
 of

*Sect. 3. of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began ; but now is made MANIFEST, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, MADE KNOWN to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.*

28. These Passages alone sufficiently prove the Assertions contain'd in N<sup>o</sup> 6 and 7 of this Section, *viz.* First, that the *Mysteries of the Gospel* were certain things in their own Nature intelligible enough, but call'd *Mysteries* by reason of the *Vail* under which they were formerly hid. Secondly, that under the Gospel this *Vail* is wholly remov'd. From which, Thirdly, follows the promis'd Conclusion, that such *Doctrines* cannot now properly deserve the Name of *Mysteries*.

29. It is observable, that the hottest Sticklers for the *Fathers* do cite their Authority only where they think it makes for them, and flight or suppress it when not favourable to their Cause. Lest it should be maliciously insinuated, that I serve the *holy Scriptures* after the same manner, I shall here transcribe all the Passages of the

*New*

*New Testament* where the word *Mystery* Ch. 3. occurs, that a Man running may read with Conviction what I defend. The whole may be commodiously reduc'd to these Heads. First, *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or the *Christian Religion* in general, as it was a future Dispensation totally hid from the *Gentiles*, and but very imperfectly known to the *Jews*: Secondly, Some particular Doctrines occasionally reveal'd by the *Apostles* are said to be *manifested Mysteries*, that is, unfolded Secrets. And, Thirdly, *Mystery* is put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Forms of Speech. Of all these in Order.

30. *Mystery* is read for the *Gospel* or *Christianity* in general in the following Passages: *Rom. 16. 25, 26. The Preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the MYSTERY which was kept secret since the World began; but now is made manifest, and by the Writings of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.* Now, in what Sense could this *Mystery* be said  
to

Sect. 3. to be reveal'd, this Secret to be made manifest, to be made known to all Nations by the Preaching of the *Apostles*, if it remain'd still incomprehensible? A mighty Favour indeed! to bless the World with a parcel of unintelligible Notions or Expressions, when it was already overstock'd with the *Acroatick* Discourses of *Aristotle*, with the *Eso-terick* Doctrines of *Pythagoras*, and the *Mysterious* Jargon of the other Sects of Philosophers; for they all made high Pretences to some rare and wonderful Secrets not communicable to every one of the Learned, and never to any of the Vulgar. By this means the obsequious Disciples apologiz'd for all that was found contradictory, incoherent, dubious, or incomprehensible in the Works of their several Masters. To any that complain'd of Inconsistency or Obscurity, they presently answer'd, O, Sir, the *Philosopher* said it, and you ought therefore to believe it: He knew his own Meaning well enough, tho he car'd not, it may be, that all others should do it too: So the Occasions of your Scruples, Sir, are only seeming, and not real. But the *Christian*

*stian Religion* has no need of such miserable Shifts and Artifices, there being nothing in it *above* or *contrary* to the strictest *Reason*: And such as are of another Mind may as well justify the idle Dreams of the *Philosophers*, the Impieties and Fables of the *Alcoran*, or any thing as well as *Christianity*. The second Passage is in 1 Cor. 2. 7. the Words were but just now read, and need not here be repeated. The third Passage is in 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a Man so account of us as the Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards or Dispensers of the MYSTERIES of God; that is, the Preachers of those Doctrines which God was pleas'd to reveal.* The fourth Passage is in Ephes. 6. 9. *Praying—for me, that Utterance may be given unto me that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the MYSTERY of the Gospel.* Parallel to this is the fifth Passage in Col. 4. 3, 4. *Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a Door of Utterance to speak the MYSTERY of Christ—that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.* The Clearness of these Words admits of no Comment. The sixth Passage is in Col. 2. 2. *That*  
H *their*

*Sect. 3. their Hearts might be comforted being  
 ~~~~~ knit together in Love, and unto all the  
 Riches of the full Assurance of Under-
 standing, to the Knowledg of the MY-
 STERY of God, and of the Father, and
 of Christ. Here is evidently meant the
 Revelation of the Gospel-State: for
 whatever right Conceptions the Jews
 might have of the Father, they had
 not that full Knowledg of Christ and
 his Doctrines, which are the inestima-
 ble Privileges we now enjoy. The
 seventh Passage is in 1 Tim. 3. 8, 9.
*Likewise must the Deacons be grave, not
 double-tongu'd, not given to much Wine,
 nor greedy of filthy Lucre, holding the
 MYSTERY of the Faith in a pure Con-
 science; that is, living to what they
 believe. The eighth and last Passage
 relating to this Head is in 1 Tim. 3. 16.
 And without Controversy great is the
 MYSTERY of Godliness: God was ma-
 nifest in the Flesh, justify'd in the Spirit,
 seen of Angels, preach'd unto the Gen-
 tiles, believ'd on in the World, receiv'd
 up into Glory. I will not now insist
 upon the various Readings of these
 Words, nor critically determine which
 is spurious or genuine. All Parties
 (how**

(how much soever they differ about Ch. 3. their Sense) agree that the Gradations of the Verse are Gospel-Revelations; so that the *Mystery of Godliness* cannot be restrain'd to any one, but is common to them all: It refers not to the Nature of any of them in particular, but to the Revelation of 'em all in general. And it must be granted, without any Dispute, that the gracious Manifestation of *Christ* and his *Gospel* is not only to us wonderfully stupendous and surprizing, but that it was likewise a very great *Mystery* to all preceding the *New Testament Dispensation*. From these Passages it appears, that the *Gospel* and the following Expressions are synonymous, viz. The *Mystery of the Faith*, the *Mystery of God and Christ*, the *Mystery of Godliness*, and the *Mystery of the Gospel*. No Doctrine then of the *Gospel* is still a *Mystery* (for the *Apostles conceal'd nothing from us that was useful, and have acquainted us with the whole Counsel of God:*) but 'tis the *Gospel* it self that was heretofore indeed a *Mystery*, and cannot now after it is fully reveal'd, properly deserve that Appellation.

Sect. 3. 31. We design in the second place
 ~~~~~ to shew, that *certain Matters occasionally reveal'd by the Apostles, were only Mysterious before that Revelation.* The Jews, who scarce allow'd other Nations to be Men, thought of nothing less than that the time should ever come wherein those Nations might be re-  
 Rom. 11.15. *concil'd to God, and be made Coheirs and Partakers with them of the same Privileges.* This was nevertheless resolv'd upon in the Divine Decree, and to the Jews was a *Mystery*, but ceases so to continue after the Revelation of it to Paul, who, in his Epistles, has openly declar'd it to all the World. The first Passage we shall alledg to that purpose is in Eph. 3.1—6,9. *If you have heard of the Dispensation of the Grace of God which is given me to you-ward, how that by Revelation he made known unto me the MYSTERY (as I wrote before in few Words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my Knowledge in the MYSTERY of Christ) which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men, as it is now reveal'd unto us, his holy Apostles and Prophets, by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs,*

heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers Ch. 3.  
 of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel—  
 and to make all Men see what is the Fellow-  
 ship of the MYSTERY, which from the  
 Beginning of the World hath been hid in  
 God. The second Passage is in Rom. II.  
 25. For I would not, Brethren, that you  
 should be ignorant of this MYSTERY,  
 that Blindness in part is happen'd to Isra-  
 el until the Fulness of the Gentiles be  
 come in. The third Passage is in Col. I.  
 25, 26, 27.—The Church, whereof I  
 am made a Minister according to the  
 Dispensation of God which is given to me  
 for you, to fulfil the Word of God, even  
 the MYSTERY which hath been hid  
 from Ages and Generations, but now is  
 made manifest to his Saints: to whom  
 God would make known what are the  
 Riches of the Glory of this MYSTERY  
 among the Gentiles. The fourth Pas-  
 sage is in Eph. I. 9, 10. Having made  
 known unto us the MYSTERY of his  
 Will, according to his good Pleasure which  
 he hath purpos'd in himself, that in the  
 Dispensation of the Fulness of times, he  
 might gather together into one all things  
 in Christ. These Places require no  
 Explication, for the Sense of them all

Sect. 3. is, that *the Secret of the Vocation of the Gentiles is in the Gospel made known, manifested and declar'd; and therefore remains no longer a Mystery.* The next thing under the Designation of a *Mystery* in the above-mention'd Sense is one Circumstance of the *Resurrection*. The *Apostle* having no less clearly and solidly than largely reason'd upon this Subject, (1 Cor. 15.) obviates an Objection or Scruple that might be rais'd about the State of such as should be found alive on the Earth at the last day. Behold, says he, ver. 51, 52. *I shew you a MYSTERY, I impart a Secret to you; we shall not all sleep, or die, but we shall all be chang'd in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye; — the Dead shall rise, and we shall be chang'd.* It is not the Doctrine of the *Resurrection* then, you see, that is here call'd a *Mystery*, but only this particular Circumstance of it, viz. that the Living shall at the Sound of the last Trumpet put off their Flesh and Blood, or their Mortality, without Dying, and be in an Instant render'd incorruptible and immortal, as well as those that shall revive. In the fifth Chapter to the Ephe-

Epheſians, ver. 31, 32. we learn that Ch. 3. the mutual Love and Conjunction of *Man* and *Wife* is a Type of that indifſoluble Union which is between *Chriſt* and his *Church*. This was queſtionleſs a *great Myſtery* before we were told it, but now there is nothing more intelligible than the Foundation of that Reſemblance or Figure. The Kingdom of *Antichriſt* in oppoſition to the *Gospel* or Kingdom of *Chriſt* is alſo call'd a *Myſtery*, becauſe it was a ſecret Deſign carry'd on inſenſibly and by degrees: but at length, all Obſtacles being remov'd or ſurmounded, it appears bare-fac'd to the Light, and (as it was divinely fore-told) ceases to continue a *Myſtery*. Let no *Man* deceive you by any means, ſays *Paul* to the *Theſſalonians*, (2 Theſſ. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.) for that Day ſhall not come except there be a falling away or Apoſtacy firſt; and that *Man* of Sin be reveal'd, the Son of Perdition, &c. And now you know what with-holdeth, that he might not be reveal'd in his time; for the MYSTERY of Iniquity doth already work, only he who now hindreth, will hinder till he be taken out of the way, and then ſhall that wicked

Sect. 3. *one be reveal'd.* These are all the Passages relating to the second Head.

32. *Mystery* is, Thirdly, put for any thing vail'd under Parables or Enigmatical Expressions in these parallel Places following. The first is in *Mat. 13. 10, 11.* *The Disciples came and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in Parables? He answer'd and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the MYSTERIES of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.* The second Passage is in *Mark 4. 11.* *And Jesus said to his Disciples, Unto you is given to know the MYSTERY of the Kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in Parables.* The same Words are repeated in *Luk. 8. 10.* And it is most evident from all of 'em, that those things which *Christ* spoke in Parables were not in themselves incomprehensible, but *mysterious* to them only to whom they were not unfolded, *that* (as it is there said) *hearing they might not understand.* It is now the most ordinary Practice in the World for such as would not be understood by every one, to agree upon a way of speaking peculiar to themselves.

selves. Nor is there any thing more Ch. 3.  
easy than the Explication which *Christ* gave of these Parables at the Request of his Disciples. ~~~~~

33. There are but two Passages only left, and *Mystery* in them has no reference to any thing in particular, but it is put for all secret things in its utmost Latitude or Acceptation. The first Place is in 1 Cor. 13. 2. *And tho I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all MYSTERIES, and all Knowledge; and tho I have all Faith so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing.* The second, parallel to this, is in 1 Cor. 14. 2. *He that speaketh in an unknown Tongue, speaketh not unto Men but unto God; for no Man understandeth him, however in the Spirit he speaketh MYSTERIES;* that is, what is intelligible enough to him, are Secrets to such as understand not his Language.

34. Having so particularly alledg'd all the Passages where there is mention made of *Mysteries* in the *New Testament*, if any should wonder why I have omitted those in the *Revelation*, to such I reply, that the *Revelation* cannot

*Sect. 3.* cannot be properly look'd upon as a Part of the *Gospel*; for there are no new Doctrines deliver'd in it. Far from being a Rule of Faith or Manners, it is not as much as an Explanation of any Point in our Religion. The true Subject of that Book or *Vision* is a Prophetical History of the External State of the Church in its various and interchangeable Periods of Prosperity or Adversity. But that I may not fall under the least Suspicion of dealing unfairly, I shall subjoin the few Texts of the *Revelation* wherein the word *Mystery* is contain'd. The first is in *Rev. 1. 20.* *The MYSTERY of the seven Stars which thou sawest in my right Hand, and the seven Golden Candlesticks: Well, what is the Mystery or Secret of these Stars and Candlesticks? The seven Stars are the Angels of the seven Churches; and the seven Candlesticks, which thou sawest, are the seven Churches, namely, of Asia.* Another Passage is in *chap. 17. 5, 7.* *And upon her Forehead was a Name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, &c. And the Angel said,—I will tell thee the MYSTERY of the Woman.*



Woman. This he performs too in the Ch. 3. following Verses, which you may consult. Nor is it undeserving our particular Notice, that *Mystery* is here made the distinguishing Mark of the false or *Antichristian Church*. *Mystery is a Name written on her Forehead*; that is, all her Religion consists in *Mystery*, she openly owns, she enjoins the Belief of *Mysteries*. And, no doubt on't, *as far as any Church allows of Mysteries, so far it is ANTICHRISTIAN*, and may with a great deal of Justice, tho little Honour, claim Kindred with the *scarlet Whore*. The only remaining Text is in chap. 10. 5, 6, 7. *And the Angel which I saw stand upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created Heaven and the things that therein are, and the Earth and the things that therein are, and the Sea and the things which are therein, that there should be Time no longer; but that in the Days of the Voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the MYSTERY of God should be finish'd: that is, that all the things figuratively deliver'd in this Prophecy concerning the Gospel* (which

Sect. 3. (which was shewn above to signify the same with the *Mystery of God*) should have their final Accomplishment, and so end with this Globe and all therein contain'd.

35. I appeal now to all equitable Persons, whether it be not evident to any that can read, that *Mystery in the whole New Testament is never put for anything inconceivable in it self, or not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Notions and Faculties, however clearly reveal'd*: And whether, on the contrary, it do's not always signify *some things naturally intelligible enough; but either so vail'd by figurative Words and Rites, or so lodg'd in God's sole Knowledg and Decree, that they could not be discover'd without special Revelation*. Whoever retains any real Veneration for the *Scripture*, and sincerely believes it to be the Word of God, must be ever concluded by its Authority, and render himself, in spight of all Prejudices, to its Evidence. He that says the *Gospel* is his only Rule of Faith, and yet believes any thing not warranted by it, he is an arrant Hypocrite, and do's but sily banter all the World.

36. -Nor

36. Nor can a more favourable Opinion be harbour'd of those, who, instead of Submission to the Dictates of *Scripture* and *Reason*, straight have Recourse to such Persons as they specially follow or admire, and are ready to receive or refuse an Opinion, as these shall please to direct them. Pray, Doctor, says one of his Parishioners, what think you of such a Book? it seems to make things plain. Ah! dear Sir, answers the Doctor, it is a very bad Book; he's a dangerous Man that wrote it; he's for believing nothing but what agrees with his own purblind, proud and carnal *Reason*. P. Say you so, Doctor? then I'm resolv'd to read no more of it, for I heard you often *preach against Humane Reason*; I'm sorry, truly, it should unhappily fall into my Hands, but I'll take care that none of our Family set their Eyes upon't. D. You'll do very well, Sir; besides, this Book is still worse than I told you, for it destroys a great many Points which we teach; and should this Doctrine take, (which God forbid) most of the good Books you have at home, and which cost you no less Pains to

Sect. 3. to read than Money to purchase, would signify not a Straw, and serve only for Waste-Paper to put under Pies, or for other mean Uses. P. Bless me, good Doctor, I pray God forgive me reading such a vile Treatise; he's an abominable Man that could write it; but what? my Books worth nothing, say you? Dr. H's Sermons, and Mr. C's Discourses Waste-Paper? I'll never believe it, let who will say the contrary; Lord, why don't you excommunicate the Author, and seize upon his Books? D. Ay, Sir, Time was,—but now it seems a Man may *believe according to his own Sense*, and not as the Church directs; there's a *Toleration* establish'd, you know. P. That *Toleration*, Doctor, will—. D. Whist, Sir, say no more of it; I am as much concern'd as you can be; but it is not safe nor expedient at this time of day to find Faults.

37. There are others far from this Simplicity, but as firmly resolv'd to stand fast by their old Systems. When they tell us of *Mysteries* we must believe them, and there's no Remedy for it. It is not the Force of Reasoning that

that makes these for *Mysteries*, but Ch. 3.  
 some by-Interest; and they'll be sure  
 to applaud and defend any Author  
 that writes in favour of their Cause,  
 whether he supports it with *Reason*  
 or not. But I'm not half so angry  
 with these Men as with a sort of Peo-  
 ple that will not be at the Pains of ex-  
 amining any thing, lest they should  
 become more clear-sighted or better in-  
 form'd, and so be tempted to take up a  
 new Road. Such Persons must needs be  
 very indifferent indeed, or they make  
 Religion come into their Scutcheons.

38. The mention of Scutcheons na-  
 turally puts me in mind of those who  
 are little mov'd with any Reasons,  
 when *the Judgment of the Primitive*  
*Church* comes in competition. The  
*Fathers* (as they love to speak) are  
 to them the best Interpreters of the  
 Words of *Scripture*; " And what  
 " those honest Men, says a very in-  
 " genious \* Person, could not make  
 " good themselves by sufficient Rea-  
 " sons, is now prov'd by their sole  
 " Authority. If the Fathers foresaw  
 " this,

---

\* M. de Fontenelle, dans son *Histoire des Oracles*.

Sect. 3. “ this, adds the same Author, they  
 “ were not to be blam’d for sparing  
 “ themselves the Labour of reasoning  
 “ more exactly than we find they  
 “ commonly did. That Truth and  
 Falshood should be determin’d by a  
 Majority of Voices, or certain Periods  
 of Time, seems to me to be the most ri-  
 diculous of all Follies.

39. But if *Antiquity* can in good  
 earnest add any worth to an Opinion,  
 I think I need not fear to stand to its  
 Decision: “ For if we consider the  
 “ Duration of the World, (says ano-  
 “ ther celebrated \* Writer) as we do  
 “ that of Man’s Life, consisting of  
 “ Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and old  
 “ Age; then certainly such as liv’d  
 “ before us were the Children or the  
 “ Youth, and we are the true Antients  
 “ of the World. And if Experience  
 “ (continues he) be the most confi-  
 “ derable Advantage which grown  
 “ Persons have over the younger sort,  
 “ then, questionless, the Experience  
 “ of such as come last into the World  
 “ must

---

\* Monsieur Perrault dans ses *Parallèles des Anciens & des Modernes*.

“ must be incomparably greater than Ch. 3.  
“ of those that were born long before  
“ them: for the last Comers enjoy not  
“ only all the Stock of their Predecessors,  
“ but to it have likewise added  
“ their own Observations. These  
Thoughts are no less ingenious than  
they are just and solid. But if *Antiquity*  
be understood in the vulgar  
Sense, I have no Reason to despair  
however; for my Assertion too will  
become antient to Posterity, and so be  
in a Condition to support it self by  
this commodious Privilege of Prescription.

40. Yet seeing I am not likely to  
live till that time; it cannot be amiss  
to make it appear that these same *Fa-  
thers*, who have the good luck to be  
at once both the Young and the Old of  
the World, are on my side. 'Tis not  
out of any Deference to their Judg-  
ments, I confess, that I take these  
Pains. I have freely declar'd what  
Value I set upon their Authority in the  
Beginning of this Book: but my De-  
sign is to shew the Disingenuity of  
those, who pretending the highest Ve-  
neration for the Writings of the *Fa-  
thers*.


Sect. 3. *thers*, never fail to decline their Sentence when it sutes not with their Humour or Interest.

41. *Clemens Alexandrinus* has every where the same Notion of *Mystery* that I have, that the *Gentiles* had, and which I have prov'd to be that of the *Gospel*. In the 5th Book of his *Stromates*, which merits the Perusal of all that are curious to understand the Nature of the *Jewish* and *Heathen Mysteries*; in that Book, I say, he puts the Matter out of all Doubt, and quotes several of those Texts of Scripture, which I have already alledg'd to this purpose. Nay he tells us, that the *Christian Discipline* was call'd \* *Illumination*, because it brought hidden things to light, the Master (*CHRIST*) alone removing the Cover of the Ark, that is, the *Mosaick Vail*. He adds in exprefs Words, † that those things which were

\* Διὰ τὸ το φωτισμὸς ἡ μαθητεία κέκληται, ἢ τὰ κρυπόμενα φανερώσασα, ἀποκαλύψαντες μόνον τῷ διδασκάλῳ τὸ πῶμα τῆ μυστη. Pag. 578. edit. Col. 1688.

† Ἀλλ' οὐδ' τὰ μυστεία τὰ ἀποκρυμμένα ἄχει ὁ ἁγ. Ἀποστόλων, καὶ ἡ αὐτοῦ παραδοξία ὡς ἀπὸ τῶ κρείν παρηγήσαν' ἀπακρυμμένα δὲ ἐν τῇ παλαιᾷ διαθήκῃ, ἃ νῦν ἐφανερώθη πῶς ἀγίοις. Idem ibid. pag. 576.



were mysterious and obscure in the Ch. 3.  
Old Testament are made plain in the   
New.

42. Every one knows how the Primitive *Christians*, in a ridiculous imitation of the Jews, turn'd all the Scripture into Allegory; accommodating the Properties of those Animals mention'd in the *Old Testament* to Events that happen'd under the *New*. They took the same Liberty principally with Men, where they could discover the least Resemblance between their Names, Actions, or State of Life; and carry'd this Fancy at length to Numbers, Letters, Places, and what not. That which in the *Old Testament* therefore did, according to them, represent any thing in the *New*, they call'd the *Type* or *Mystery* of it. Thus *TYPE*, *STMBOL*, *PARABLE*, *SHADOW*, *FIGURE*, *SIGN* and *MYSTERY*, signify all the same thing in *Justin Martyr*. This Father affirms in his Dialogue with *Tryphon* the Jew, that the Name of *Josbua* was a *Mystery* representing the Name *Jesus*; and that the holding up of *Mo-* Exod. 17.  
*ses's* 11.

SECT. 3. *ses's* Hands during the Battel with the *Amalekites* in *Rephidim*, was a Type or Mystery of *Christ's Cross*, whereby he overcame Death, as the *Israelites* there did their Enemies : and then he adds the following Remark ; \* *This is to be consider'd*, says he, concerning those two holy Men and Prophets of God, that neither of them was able in his single Person to carry both MYSTERIES, I mean the Type of his Cross, and that of being call'd by his Name. In the same Dialogue he calls the Predictions of the Prophets † SYMBOLS, PARABLES and MYSTERIES, explain'd by the succeeding Prophets.

43. When *Tertullian* in his *Apology* justifies the Christians from those inhu-

\* Ἦν δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐπ' αὐποτέρων τ' ἀγίων ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων καὶ προφητῶν τῶ θεοῦ, νοῦσαι μηχανημένον· ὅτι αὐποτέρων τὰ μυστήρια εἰς αὐτῶν βασιλεῖαι ἐκ τῆς δύνα-  
τος λέγω δὲ τὸν τύπον τῆ σταυροῦ, καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῆ τοῦ θανά-  
του ἐπικλήσεως. Pag. 338. edit. Col. 1686.

† Εἰ μὴ τὸ τὸ ἐκ δόξης, ὃ φίλοι, ὅτι πολλὰς λόγους τῶς ἀπακαλυμμέναις καὶ ἐκ δόξης βολαῖς ἡμῶς ἡ-  
τοιμασμέναις ἐργῶν λελεγεμέναις, οἱ μετ' ἐκείνων  
ταῖς εἰπόντας ἡ περὶ πάντας γινόμενοι προφηταὶ ἐξηγή-  
σαντο. Pag. 294.

inhumane Practices whereof their E- Ch. 3.  
 nemies most unjustly accus'd 'em, he  
 cries, \* ' We are beset, we are disco-  
 ' ver'd every day ; ——— But if we  
 ' keep always hid, how are those  
 ' things known which we are said to  
 ' commit ? Nay, who could make  
 ' them known ? Such as are guilty !  
 ' Not so, surely : for all *Mysteries*  
 ' are of Course under an Oath of Se-  
 ' crecy. The *Samothracian*, the *Eleu-*  
 ' *sinian Mysteries* are conceal'd ; how  
 ' much rather such as being discover'd  
 ' would now provoke the Justice of  
 ' Men, and might expect to meet  
 ' with that of God hereafter ? They  
 are secret Practices, you see, and not  
 incomprehensible Doctrines which this  
 Father counted *Mysteries*.

44. *Origen* makes the Encampments  
 of the *Israelites* in their Journey to the

I 3

Pro-

---

\* Quotidiè obsidemur, quotidiè prodimur ;  
 — Si semper latemus, quando proditum est quod ad-  
 mittimus ? Immo à quibus prodi potuit ? Ab ipsi-  
 reis ! Non utique ; cum vel ex forma omnibus My-  
 steriis silentii fides debeatur. *Samothracia* & *Eleu-*  
*sinia* reticentur ; quanto magis talia quæ prodita in-  
 terim etiam Humanam animadversionem provoca-  
 bunt, dum Divina servatur ? *Pag. 8. edit. Paris.*  
 1675.

Sect. 3. Promis'd Land to be \* Symbols or Mysteries describing the way to such as shall travel towards Heaven, or heavenly things. I need not add what he says of the Writings of the Prophets, of the Vision of Ezekiel, or the Apocalypse in particular: for he is universally confess'd to have brought this Mystick or Allegorical Method of interpreting Scripture to its Perfection, and to have furnish'd Matter to all that trod the same Path after him; an Honour, in my Opinion, not to be envy'd him. But he was so far from thinking any Doctrine of our Religion a Mystery in the present Sense of the Word, that he expressly affirms them † to agree all with COMMON NOTIONS, and to commend themselves to the Assent of every well-dispos'd Hearer.

45. The

\* Εἰ δὲ δύναται διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τὴν ὁδὸν δηλωθῆναι τὴν ὁδοῦσάντων ὅτι τὰ θεῖα μαθεῖν ἀναγκαῖο τὸς ἐπαγγεσμένους Ἀειδμῆς Μωσέως, καὶ ζητῆσαι τὴν δυνάμενον (αὐτὸν) μεταγωῆσαι ὅτι τὰ τὴ παρεμβολῶν τῶν ἱερῶν ἱερῶν ἀναγγεσμένα. Lib. 6, contra Cell. pag. 291. edit. Cantab. 1677.

† Ὅσα δὲ εἰ μὴ τὰ τὴ πίστεως ἡμῶν ταῖς ΚΟΙΝΑΙΣ ΕΝΝΟΙΑΙΣ ἀσφαλῶς συναρρεῦντα, μετατίθῃται τὰς ἐκγνωμένως ἀκούστας τὴ λεγούσων. Lib. 3. contra Cell. pag. 135.

45. The other *Fathers* of the three Ch. 3.  
first Centuries have exactly the same  
Notions of *Mystery*: And should they  
in this Matter happen to contradict  
in one Place what they establish'd in  
another, (as they ordinarily do in  
most things) it would only serve to  
*exclude them from being a true Rule to*  
*others that were none to themselves,*  
But what is no small Prejudice in our  
Favour, seeing we have to do with  
Men so apt to forget, they keep ve-  
ry constant to this Point: so that I  
may justly hope by this time the Cause  
of *Incomprehensible and Inconceivable*  
*Mysteries in Religion* should be readily  
given up by all that sincerely respect  
FATHERS, SCRIPTURE, or  
REASON.



## C H A P. IV.

Objections brought from particular Texts of *SCRIPTURE*, and from the Nature of *FAITH*, answer'd.

46. **S**OME Men are so fond of *Mysteries*, and it seems they find their Account in it, that they are ready to hazard any thing sooner than part with them. In the mean time, whether they know it or not, they lay nothing less than their Religion at stake by this Conduct; for it is an ugly Sign when People profess that what they believe is above the Examination of Reason, and will suffer it by no means to come into question: *It argues in themselves a Distrust of their Cause; and others conclude, that what dares not abide the Trial of Reason, must needs it self be unreasonable at Bottom.*

47. Notwithstanding these Consequences are so obvious, they harden them-

themselves against them, and are not Ch. 4.  
 ashamed to bring even *Scripture* to  
 countenance their Assertion. You  
 shall hear nothing more frequently  
 in their Mouths than these Words of  
 the Apostle, *Beware lest any Man spoil* Col. 2. 8.  
*you by PHILOSOPHY and vain*  
*Deceit, after the Tradition of Men,*  
*after the Rudiments of the World, and*  
*not after Christ.* Ridiculous! as if  
 Reason and Truth were Vanity and  
 Craft! By *Philosophy* is not here un-  
 derstood *sound Reason*, (as all Inter-  
 preters agree) but the Systems of *Pla-*  
*to*, of *Aristotle*, of *Epicurus*, of the  
*Academicks*, &c. many of whose Prin-  
 ciples are directly repugnant to com-  
 mon Sense and good Morals. *Sophi-*  
*stry* was never more in vogue than in  
 the Days of *Paul*; and several out  
 of these Sects imbracing *Christianity*,  
 found the way to mix with it their old  
 Opinions, which they were loth to quit  
 for good and all. The Apostle there-  
 fore had weighty grounds to warn his  
 Converts not to confound the Inven-  
 tions of Men with the Doctrine of God.  
 It appears nevertheless that this good  
 Advice was to little Purpose, for you'll  
 find

Sect. 3. find the grossest Mistakes and Whim-  
 ~~~~~sies of the *Fathers* to have been occa-  
 sion'd by the several Systems of *Philos-*
sophy they read before their Conver-
 sion, and which they afterwards foo-
 lishly endeavour'd to reconcile with
Christianity, to the entire Ruine almost
 of the latter, as we shall shew in the
 following Chapter.

48. But as no particular *Hypothesis*
 whatsoever has a Right to set up for a
 Standard of Reason to all Mankind,
 much less may *vain Philosophy* or *So-*
phistry claim this Privilege: and so far
 am I from aiming at any such thing,
 that it is the very Practice I oppose in
 this Book. When some have ad-
 vanc'd the Metaphysical Nonsense of
 doting *Philosophers* into Articles of
 Faith, they raise a loud Clamour a-
 gainst *Reason*, before whose Evidence
 and Light their empty Shadows must
 disappear. For as in *Philosophy* so in
Religion every Sect has its peculiar
 Extravagancies, and the INCOM-
 PREHENSIBLE MYSTERIES
 of the latter do perfectly answer the
 OCCULT QUALITIES of the for-
 mer. They were both calculated at
 first

first for the same Ends, *viz.* to stop the Ch. 4.
 Mouths of such as demand a Reason where
 none can be given, and to keep as many
 in Ignorance as Interest shall think con-
 venient. But God forbid that I should
 impute the like nefarious Designs to all
 that contend for *Mysteries* now, Thou-
 sands whereof I know to be the best
 meaning Men in the Universe. This
sophistical or *corrupt Philosophy* is else-
 where in the *New Testament* stil'd
 the *Wisdom of this World*, to which I Cor. 3.
 the Greeks were as much bigotted, as 19.
 the Jews were infatuated with a Fancy
 that nothing could be true but what
 was miraculously prov'd so: *The Jews*
require a Sign, and the Greeks seek after I Cor. 1.
Wisdom. But this boasted Wisdom 22.
 was then *Foolishness with God*, and so
 it is now with considering Men.

49. A Passage out of the Epistle to
 the *Romans* is cited likewise to prove
 Humane Reason not a capable Judg of
 what is divinely reveal'd. The Words
 are, *The Carnal Mind is Enmity against* Rom. 8. 7.
God; for it is not subject to the Law of
God, neither indeed can be. But if these
 Words be spoken of Reason, there can
 be nothing more false; because Reason
 do's

Sect. 3. do's and ought to subject it self to the
 Divine Law: yet this Submission argues no Imperfection in *Reason*, as our Obedience to just Laws cannot be said to destroy our Liberty. *Reason* must first understand the Law of God, and then comply with it; for a Man can no more deserve Punishment for not observing such Laws as are unintelligible, than for not performing what was never enjoin'd him. The carnal *Mind* then in this Place is not *Reason*, but the carnal Desires of lewd and wicked Men; whose Practices, as they are contrary to the reveal'd Law of God, so they are to that of sound *Reason* too.

50. What has been discours'd of pretended Wisdom and sensual Minds, may be easily appli'd to another Passage where it is said, that the Weapons
 2 Cor. 10: of our Warfare are not carnal, but mighty
 4. 5. through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, casting down Imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the Knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every Thought to the Obedience of Christ. It is plain from the Words as well as the Scope of the whole,

whole, that these are the Thoughts Ch. 4.
 and Imaginations of foolish and pro-
 fane Men, and should be captivated or
 reform'd by *Reason* as well as *Scripture*;
 as, in effect, they often are: for
 such Persons not ordinarily allowing
 of Argument from *Scripture*, are first
 perswaded by *Reason*, and after that
 they receive the *Scripture*. But can
Reason cast down or destroy it self?
 No; but it reduces those vain and
 impious Sophisms which borrow its
 Name to cover or authorize the Dis-
 orders they occasion. It would be extremely tedious
 to go one by one over all the Texts
 which ignorant or perverse Men al-
 ledge against that Use of Reason in
 Religion, which I particularly esta-
 blish. Any single Passage to my pur-
 pose should, one would think, give
 sufficient Satisfaction to all *Christian*
 Lovers of Truth: for the Word of
 God must be every where uniform
 and self-consistent. But I have quoted
 several in the second Chapter of the
 second Section, to speak nothing of
 what I perform'd in the foregoing
 Chapter of the present Section. Yet
 because

Sect. 3) because this Reasoning might be re-
 torted, and to leave no plausible Pre-
 tentes to Cavillers or Deceivers, I have
 punctually answer'd the strongest Ob-
 jections I have observ'd in the most
 celebrated Pieces of *Divinity*; I say
which I have observ'd, for I should read
 the *Gospel* a Million of Times over be-
 fore the Vulgar Notion of *Mystery*
 could ever enter into my Head, or any
 Passage in that Book could suggest to
 me that the Sense of it was above
 Reason or Enquiry. Nor do I find
 my self yet inclin'd to envy those
 who entertain other Thoughts of it,
 when all the while they openly ac-
 knowledg it to be a Divine Revelation.
 But seeing the most material Difficul-
 ty made to me by a Friend, is, that
 my Opinion destroys the Nature of
FAITH, I shall with all the Brevi-
 ty I can deliver my Sentiments con-
 cerning this Subject.

§2. I will spend no time upon the
 ordinary Divisions of *Faith* into Hi-
 storical, Temporary, or Justifying,
 Lively or Dead, Weak or Strong, be-
 cause most of these are not so much
Faith it self, as different Effects there-
 of.

of. The word imports *Belief* or *Per-* Ch. 4
swasion, as when we give Credit to any thing which is told us by God or Man; whence *Faith* is properly divided into *Human* and *Divine*. Again, *Divine Faith* is either when God speaks to us immediately himself, or when we acquiesce in the Words or Writings of those to whom we believe he has spoken. All *Faith* now in the World is of this last sort, and by consequence entirely built upon *Ratiocination*. For we must first be convinc'd that those Writings are theirs whose Names they bear; we then examine the outward State and Actions of those Persons; and lastly understand what is contain'd in their Works; otherwise we cannot determine whether they be worthy of God or not, much less firmly believe them.

§3. To be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is no real *Faith* or *Perfwasion*, but a rash *Presumption*, and an obstinate *Prejudice*, rather becoming *Enthusiasts* or *Impostors* than the taught of God, who has no Interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants Ability to inform them rightly. I
 proud

Sect. 3. prov'd before, (Sect. 2. Chap. 2.) that the Difference between *Human* and *Divine Revelations* did not consist in degrees of Perspicuity, but in Certitude. So many Circumstances frequently concur in History as render it equal to Intuition: Thus I can as soon deny my own Being as the Murder of *Cicero*, or the Story of *William the Conqueror*; yet this happens only sometimes: But God speaks always Truth and Certainty.

§ 54. Now since by Revelation Men are not endu'd with any new Faculties, it follows that God should lose his end in speaking to them, if what he said did not agree with their common Notions. Could that Person justly value himself upon being wiser than his Neighbours, who having infallible Assurance that something call'd *Blictri* had a Being in Nature, in the mean time knew not what this *Blictri* was? And seeing the Case stands really thus, all Faith or Perswasion must necessarily consist of two Parts, *Knowledge* and *Assent*. 'Tis the last indeed that constitutes the formal Act of Faith, but not without the Evidence of the first: And this

this is the true Account we have of it Ch. 4. all over the *New Testament*. There we read that *without Faith it is impossible to please God*; but he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. So the firm Perswasion of a pious Man that his Requests will be granted, is grounded upon his knowledge of the Being, Goodness, and Power of God. It was reckon'd no Crime not to believe in *Christ* before he was reveal'd; for how could they believe in him of whom they had not heard? But with what better Reason could any be condemn'd for not believing what he said, if they might not understand it? for, as far as I can see, these Cases are parallel. *Faith* is likewise said to come by hearing; but without Understanding 'tis plain this Hearing would signify nothing, Words and their Ideas being reciprocal in all Languages.

Heb. 11.6.

Rom. 10.14.

Ver. 17.

55. The Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* do's not define *FAITH* a Prejudice, Opinion, or Conjecture, but Conviction or Demonstration: *Faith*, says he, is the confident Expectation of things hop'd for, and the Demonstration

Heb. 11.1.

K

of

Sect. 3. *of things not seen.* These last Words, *things not seen*, signify not (as some would have it) things incomprehensible or unintelligible, but past or future Matters of Fact, as the Creation of the World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, or the Belief of some things invisible to our corporeal Eyes, tho intelligible enough to the Eyes of our Understanding. This appears by all the Examples subjoin'd to that Definition. Besides, there can be properly no *Faith* of things seen or present, for then 'tis Self-evidence, and not Ra-

Rom. 8. 24. *tiocination: Hope that is seen is not*
 25. *Hope, for what a Man sees why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for what we see not, then do we with Patience wait for*

Heb. 11. 13. *it.* So the Patriarchs receiv'd not the Promises, but saw them afar off, and were perswaded of them.

56. Without conceiving *Faith* after this manner, how could *Christ* be term'd the *Light of the World*, the *Light of the Gentiles*? How could Believers be said to have the *Spirit of Wisdom*, and to have the *Eyes of their Hearts enlightn'd*? For the *Light of the Heart* or *Understanding* is the *Knowledge* of things;

Joh. 8. 12.

& 9. 5.

Acts 13. 47.

Eph. 1. 17.

Ver. 18.

things; and as this Knowledg is more Ch. 4.
or less, so the Mind is proportionably
illuminated. *Be not unwise*, says the Eph. 5. 17.
Apostle, *but understanding what the Will
of the Lord is.* And in another place
he exhorts Men never to act in dubious
Matters till they are *fully perswaded in* Rom. 14. 5.
their own Minds.

57. But to all this will be objected
that remarkable Instance of *Abraham's*
Faith, who was ready to sacrifice his
only Son, notwithstanding God had
promis'd that Kings should descend of
him, and his Seed be numerous as the
Stars of Heaven, or the Sand upon
the Sea-shore. Did *Abraham* blindly
obey then, without reconciling the
apparent Contradiction between God's
present Command and his former Pro-
mises? Far from it: for 'tis expresly
recorded, that *he that had receiv'd the* Heb. 11. 17,
Promises offer'd up his only begotten, of 18, 19.
whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy
*Seed be blessed; * Reasoning that God was*
able to raise him again from the Dead,
from whence also he had receiv'd him in a
Figure. He rightly concluded that
K 2 God

* *ὁ ἀγαπῶν* should be translated.

Sect. 3. God was able to revive *Isaac* by a Miracle, as he was miraculously born, according to another Promise, after his Parents were past having Children, and so *as good as dead*: therefore it is elsewhere written of *Abraham*, that *being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body now dead, when he was about an hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of Sarah's Womb; nor stagger'd at God's Promise through Unbelief; but being strong in Faith he gave Glory to God, and was fully perswaded that what he had promis'd he was able also to perform.*

Ver. 12.

Rom. 4.

19, 20, 21.

58. Now what is there in all this, but very strict Reasoning from Experience, from the Possibility of the thing, and from the Power, Justice, and Immutability of him that promis'd it? Nor can any Man shew me in all the *New Testament* another Signification of *Faith* but a most firm Perswasion built upon substantial Reasons. In this Sense all *Christianity* is not seldom stil'd *the Faith*; as now we usually say that we are, of this or that *PERSWASION*, meaning the Profession of some Religion. But surely nothing

nothing can better root and *establiſh* Ch. 4.
our Perſwaſion than a thorow Examination and Trial of what we believe; whereas the Weakneſs and Inſtability of our *Faith* proceed from want of ſufficient Reaſons for it, whereupon Incredulity always follows; then fails Obedience, which is the conſtant Sign and Fruit of genuine *Faith*; and hence ſpring all the Irregularities of Mens Lives. *He that ſaith I know* 1 John 2.
him, and keepeth not his Commandments, 4. 6.
is a Liar—For he that ſaith he abideth in him, ought himſelf alſo to walk as he walk'd. Nor can it poſſibly fall out otherwiſe, but that he who believes without Underſtanding muſt be toſt and carri'd about with every Wind of Eph. 4. 14.
Doctrine, by the Slight and Cunning of Men ready to deceive.

59. Tho the Authority of the New Teſtament be ſo clear in this Matter, yet I ſhall further confirm it by the following Obſervations. Firſt, *if Faith were not a Perſwaſion reſulting from the previous Knowledge and Comprehension of the thing believ'd, there could be no Degrees nor Differences in it*; for theſe are evident Tokens that Men know more

Sect. 3. or less of a thing, as they have Desires or Opportunities to learn it. But that there are such Degrees appears by the *Scripture*, where those that have only an imperfect and perfunctory Knowledge of Religion are compar'd to *Infants* who feed only upon Milk; but they who arrive at a more full and accurate Certainty are liken'd to Heb. 5. 12, *grown Men* that can digest stronger Food. 13, 14.

60. My next Observation is, That the Subject of Faith must be intelligible to all, since the Belief thereof is commanded under no less a Penalty than Mark 16. 16. *Damnation*: He that believeth not, shall be damn'd. But shall any be damn'd for the Non-performance of Impossibilities? Obligations to believe do therefore suppose a Possibility to understand. I shew'd before that *Contradiction* and *Nothing* were convertible Terms; and I may now say as much of *Mystery* in the Theological Sense: for, to speak freely, *Contradiction* and *Mystery* are but two emphatick ways of saying Nothing. *Contradiction* expresses Nothing by a couple of Ideas that destroy one another, and

and *Mystery* expresses Nothing by Ch. 4:
Words that have no Ideas at all. ~~~~~

61. The third Observation shall be,
That if any part of *Scripture* were unintelligible, it could never be rightly translated, except the Sound of the Words, and not their Sense, be look'd upon as the Revelation of God. Terms can by no means be understood, unless the things they denote be understood also. I may well understand Things without their Names, but never Names without knowing their Subjects. And, in good earnest, to what sort of Assurance can any Man pretend, that he has made a right Version of what he openly professes not to conceive? It cannot be imagin'd how much the Notion of *Mystery* contributes to the Obscurity of *Scripture* in most Translations. When an able Linguist meets with a difficult Passage, he presently takes it for a *Mystery*, and concludes it is to no purpose to be at more Pains about what is in it self inexplicable. But an uncapable Translator lays his own blundring Nonsense, and all the *mysterious* Fruits of his Ignorance to God Almighty's Charge. These are

W Sect. 3. the Wretches who plentifully furnish the *Atheistical* and *Profane* with all the Matter of their Objections against *Scripture*. But I hope in Time we may see a Remedy to these Disorders.

62. The fourth Observation is, That except *Faith* signifies an intelligible Persuasion, we cannot give others a Reason of our Hope, as Peter directs us. To say that what we believe is the Word of God, will be to no end, except we prove it to be so by Reason; and I need not add, that if we may not examine and understand our *Faith*, every Man will be oblig'd implicitly to continue of that Religion wherein he is first educated. Suppose a *Siamese* * *Talapoin* should tell a *Christian* Preacher that † *Sommonocodom* forbid the Goodness of his Religion to be tri'd by the Light of Reason; how could the *Christian* confute him, if he likewise should maintain that certain Points of Christianity were above Reason? The Question would not be then, whe-

* Or Priest.

† The God of the Siameses.

whether *Mysteries* might be allow'd in Ch. 4. the true Religion, but who had more Right to institute them, *Christ* or *Sommonocodom*?

63. My last Observation shall be, That *either the Apostles could not write more intelligibly of the reputed Mysteries, or they would not*. If they would not, then 'tis no longer our Fault if we neither understand nor believe them, for *nothing* cannot be the Object of Belief: And if they could not write more clearly themselves (which our Adversaries will not suppose) they were so much the less to expect Credit from others.

64. But 'tis affirm'd, that GOD has a Right to require the Assent of his Creatures to what they cannot comprehend: and questionless, he may command whatever is just and reasonable, for to act Tyrannically do's only become the Devil. But I demand to what end should God require us to believe what we cannot understand? To exercise, some say, *our Diligence*. But this at first sight looks ridiculous, as if the plain Duties of the Gospel, and our necessary Occupations, were not sufficient to

W Sect. 3. to employ all our time. But how exercise our Diligence? Is it possible for us to understand those *Mysteries* at last, or not? If it be, then all I contend for is gain'd; for I never pretended that the *Gospel* could be understood without due Pains and Application, no more than any other Book. But if it be impossible after all to understand them, this is such a piece of Folly and Impertinence as no sober Man would be guilty of, to puzzle Peoples Heads with what they could never conceive, to exhort to, and command the Study of them; and all this to keep 'em from Idleness, when they can scarce find leisure enough for what is on all hands granted to be intelligible.

65. Others say that *GOD* has enjoin'd the Belief of *MYSTERIES* to make us more humble. But how? By letting us see the small Extent of our Knowledge. But this extraordinary Method is quite needless, for Experience acquaints us with that every day; and I have spent a whole Chapter in the second Section of this Book, to prove that we have not an adequate Idea of all the Properties, and no Idea of

of the real Essence of any Substance Ch. 4.
in the World. It had been a much better Answer, that God would thus abridg our Speculations, to gain us the more time for the practice of what we understand. But many cover a *Multitude of Sins* by their Noise and Heat on the behalf of such foolish, and unprofitable Speculations.

66. From all these Observations, and what went before, it evidently follows that *Faith* is so far from being an implicate Assent to any thing above Reason, that this Notion directly contradicts the Ends of Religion, the Nature of Man, and the Goodness and Wisdom of God. But at this rate, some will be apt to say, *Faith* is no longer *Faith* but *Knowledg*. I answer, that if *Knowledg* be taken for a present and immediate View of things, I have no where affirm'd any thing like it, but the contrary in many Places. But if by *Knowledg* be meant understanding what is believ'd, then I stand by it that *Faith* is *Knowledg*: I have all along maintain'd it, and the very Words are promiscuously us'd for one another in the Gospel. *We know*, i. e. we

Sect. 3. we believe, *that this is indeed the Christ,*
the Saviour of the World. I know, and
 Joh. 4. 42. *am perswaded by the Lord Jesus: that*
 Rom. 14. *there is nothing unclean of it self. You*
 14.
 1 Cor. 15. *know that your Labour is not in vain in*
 58. *the Lord.*

67. Others will say that this Notion of *Faith* makes *Revelation* useless. But, pray, how so? for the Question is not, whether we could discover all the Objects of our *Faith* by Ratiocination: I have prov'd on the contrary, that no Matter of Fact can be known without *Revelation*. But I assert, that what is once reveal'd we must as well understand as any other Matter in the World, *Revelation* being only of use to inform us whilst the Evidence of its Subject perswades us. Then, reply they, *Reason* is of more Dignity than *Revelation*. I answer, Just as much as a *Greek Grammar* is superiour to the *New Testament*; for we make use of *Grammar* to understand the Language, and of *Reason* to comprehend the Sense of that Book. But in a word, I see no need of Comparisons in this Case, for *Reason* is not less from God than *Revelation*; 'tis the Candle,
 the

the Guide, the Judg he has lodg'd Ch. 4.
within every Man that cometh into this World.

68. Lastly, It may be objected, That the Poor and Illiterate cannot have such a *Faith* as I maintain. Truly if this can be made out, it may pass for a greater *Mystery* than any System of *Divinity* in *Christendom* can afford: for what can seem more strange and wonderful, than that the common People will sooner believe what is unintelligible, incomprehensible, and above their Reasons, than what is easy, plain, and suited to their Capacities? But the Vulgar are more oblig'd to *Christ*, who had a better Opinion of them than these Men; for he preach'd his *Gospel* to them in a special manner; and they, on the other hand, *heard him gladly*; Mark 12. because, no doubt, they understood his Instructions better than the *mystrious* Lectures of their *Priests* and *Scribes*. The uncorrupted Doctrines of *Christianity* are not above their Reach or Comprehension, but the Gibberish of your *Divinity Schools* they understand not. It is to them *the Language of the Beast*, and is inconsistent

Sect. 3. *W*isitent with their Condition in this World, when their very Teachers must serve above an Apprenticeship to master it, before they begin the Study of the *Bible*. How slowly must the *Gospel* have mov'd at the Beginning, if such as were call'd to preach it had been oblig'd to qualify themselves after this manner! And no wonder that it has such little Effects now upon Mens Lives, after it is so miserably deform'd and almost ruin'd by those unintelligible and extravagant Terms, Notions, and Rites of *Pagan* or *Jewish* Original.

69. Thus I have distinctly answer'd the several Objections made to me, and I shall add no more on this Subject of *Faith*, when I have consider'd a Passage in the first Epistle to *Peter*, where it is written, that *the Angels* desire to see into certain things; yet those things are not inconceivable *Mysteries*, but the Coming of *Christ* and the *Gospel-state of Salvation*, which were divinely foretold to the *Jews*, and concerning which they carefully reason'd then; tho, now those things are fulfill'd, we are not permitted that Liberty.

ty. Receiving the end of your Faith, Ch. 4. says Peter, the Salvation of your Souls; of which Salvation the Prophets have enquir'd and diligently search'd, who prophesied of the Grace that should come unto you; searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testify'd before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow: Unto whom it was reveal'd, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preach'd unto you by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, which things the Angels desire to look into. Now here's no great Mystery in all this, that the Angels, who being finite Creatures, can know nothing but by Experience, Ratiocination, or Revelation, should be as curious as the Jews, to penetrate into those future Events of such Importance, and so very obscurely reveal'd.

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Objections, drawn from the Consideration of *MIRACLES*, answer'd.

70. **W**Hen all other shifts prove ineffectual, the Partizans of *MYSTERY* fly to *MIRACLES* as their last Refuge: but this is too weak a Place to make any long Resistance, and we doubt not of beating 'em quickly thence with Ease and Safety. But seeing, for the most part, the State of this Controversy is never distinctly laid, I shall first endeavour to give a clear Notion of the Nature of *Miracles*, and then leave it to be consider'd whether I have much Reason to apprehend any Danger from this Objection. *A MIRACLE* then is *some Action exceeding all humane Power, and which the Laws of NATURE cannot perform by their ordinary Operations.*

71. Now

71. Now whatever is contrary to Ch. 5. Reason can be no *Miracle*, for it has been sufficiently prov'd already, that *Contradiction* is only another word for *Impossible* or *Nothing*. The *miraculous* Action therefore must be something in it self intelligible and possible, tho the manner of doing it be extraordinary. So for a Man to walk safe in the midst of Fire is conceivable, and possible too, should any thing capable of repelling the Heat and Flames surround him: but when such a Security is not provided by Art or Chance, but is the immediate Effect of supernatural Power, then it makes a *Miracle*. An able *Physician* do's sometimes restore Sight to the Blind; and a Hand or Foot must dry up, when the Circulation of the Blood and Humours is too much excluded from it: but if without the ordinary Time and Applications those Members be cur'd in an Instant, at the Command or Desire of any Person, such an Action is truly *miraculous*, as well as the sudden Restoration of a sick Body to Health, which Art or Nature must spend a great deal of Time and Pains upon.

L

72. No

Sect. 3.

72. No *Miracle* then is contrary to Reason, for the Action must be intelligible, and the Performance of it appear most easy to the Author of *Nature*, who may command all its Principles at his Pleasure. Therefore all those *Miracles* are fictitious, wherein there occur any Contradictions, as that *Christ* was born without opening any Passage out of the *Virgin's* Body; that a Head spoke some Days after it was sever'd from the Body, and the Tongue cut out; with Multitudes of this kind that may be met with among the *Papists*, the *Jews*, the *Bramins*, the *Mahometans*, and in all Places where the Credulity of the People makes 'em a Merchandize to their Priests.

73. Let us next consider, that God is not so prodigal of *Miracles*, as to work any at random. The Order of Nature is not alter'd, stopp'd, or forwarded, unless for some weighty Design becoming the Divine Wisdom and Majesty. And, indeed, we learn from *Scripture* and *Reason*, that no *Miracle* is ever wrought without some special and important End, which is either appointed by those for whom the *Miracle*

cle is made, or intended and declar'd Ch. 5. by him that works it. If the *Apostles* had barely cur'd the blind, the deaf, the lame, the diseas'd, this would certainly procure 'em an extraordinary Esteem; and in some Places too Divine VVorship, as it happen'd to *Paul* and *Barnabas* at *Lystra*, when they had cur'd a born Cripple without any farther Circumstance; but this was only a Means to gain the Attention of these Idolaters to the Doctrine they were about to preach in their City. Nor is there any *Miracle* mention'd in the *New Testament*, but what serv'd to confirm the Authority of those that wrought it, to procure Attention to the Doctrines of the *Gospel*, or for the like wise and reasonable Purposes.

Acts 14.
11, &c.

74. By this Rule the celebrated Feats of *Goblins* and *Fairies*, of *Witches*, of *Conjurers*, and all the *Heathen Prodigies*, must be accounted fictitious, idle, and superstitious Fables; for in all these there appears no End deserving a Change in *Nature*. Besides, they evidently contradict our Idea of God, and quite subvert his Providence. Diabolical Delusions would hereby re-

Sect. 3. receive equal Confirmation with Divine Revelation, *Miracles* being perform'd in favour of both. Nay, the VVonders of the *Devil* and his Agents would infinitely exceed in Number and Quality those of God, and his Servants: which Assertion must hold true, were no Stories believ'd but the best attested in every County of *England*, to speak nothing of more credulous Nations; for it is very observable, that the more ignorant and barbarous any People remain, you shall find 'em most abound with Tales of this nature, and stand in far greater Aw of *Satan* than *Jehovah*. In a word, the *Heathens*, after this rate, would be rivetted in their *Idolatry*, and the ugliest Hag or most beggarly Astrologer equalize the Prophets and Apostles. But why should good Reasons be spent in Confutation of mere Fictions? for I challenge any Person whatsoever to produce one Instance of these lying VVonders that contains all the true Characters of Historical Evidence; and withal I dare engage as soon to prove the Goodness of the *Alcoran* as of the *Gospel*, if the Belief of any *Miracles*, except Divine ones, be granted me. But they must draw some Advan-

Advantage from the superstitious Fear Ch. 5.
of the People, who so industriously cherish it.

75. After what has been already observ'd, I need not add, that all *Miracles* secretly perform'd, or among that Party only to whose Profit and Advantage the Belief of them turns, must be rejected as counterfeit and false; for as such cannot bear the Test of moral Certitude, so they contradict the very Design of Miracles, which are always wrought in favour of the Unbelieving. But the *Papists* alone must be the VVitnesses of their own *Miracles*, and never the *Hereticks* they would convert by them: nor is their Practice less ridiculous in confirming one Miracle by another, as that of *Transubstantiation* by several more.

76. From all this laid together, it follows, that nothing contrary to Reason, whether you consider the Action or Design, is *miraculous*. But there's a good old Distinction that serves all turns: Tho *Miracles* are not contrary to Reason, says one, yet they are surely above it. In what Sense pray? Which is above Reason, the Thing, or the Manner of it? If it be answer'd, the

L 3

last,

Sect. 3. last, I suppose the Objector thinks I mean by *Miracle* some Philosophical Experiment, or some *Phenomenon* that surprizes only by its Rarity. Could I tell how a *Miracle* was wrought, I believe I might do as much my self; but what may be said to have been this or that way perform'd, is no *Miracle* at all. It suffices therefore, that the Truth of the Action be demonstrated, and the Possibility of it, to any *Being* able to govern Nature by instantaneously extracting, mollifying, mixing, infusing, consolidating, &c. and this, it may be, by the Ministry of thousands at once; for Miracles are produc'd according to the Laws of Nature, tho' above its ordinary Operations, which are therefore supernaturally assisted.

77. But finally, it will be said, that in *the State of the Question*, at the beginning of my Book, I maintain'd the Manner as well as the Thing was explicable. But of what? of *Miracles*? No surely; but of those *Doctrines* in Confirmation whereof the *Miracles* are wrought. This I stand by still, and may add, I hope, that I have clearly prov'd

prov'd it too: But to say as much of Ch. 6. *Miracles* would be to make 'em no *Miracles*, which shews the Weakness, and Impertinence of this Objection.

CHAP. VI.

When, why, and by whom were MYSTERIES brought into Christianity.

78. **T**HE End of the LAW being Righteousness, JESUS CHRIST came not to destroy, but to fulfil Rom. 10. 4. Mat. 5. 17. it: for he fully and clearly preach'd the purest Morals, he taught that reasonable Worship, and those just Conceptions of Heaven and Heavenly Things, which were more obscurely signifi'd or design'd by the Legal Observations. So having stripp'd the Truth of all those external Types and Ceremonies which made it difficult before, he render'd it easy and obvious to the meanest Capacities. His Disciples and Followers kept to this Simplicity for some considerable time, tho very early di-

Sect. 3. vers Abuses began to get footing amongst them. The converted *Jews*, who continu'd mighty fond of their *Levitical* Rites and Feasts, would willingly retain them, and be Christians too. Thus what at the beginning was but only tolerated in weaker Brethren, became afterwards a part of *Christianity* it self, under the Pretence of *Apostolick* Prescription or Tradition.

79. But this was nothing compar'd to the Injury done to Religion by the *Gentiles*; who, as they were proselyted in greater Numbers than the *Jews*, so the Abuses they introduc'd were of more dangerous and universal Influence. They were not a little scandaliz'd at the plain Dress of the *Gospel*, with the wonderful Facility of the Doctrines it contain'd, having been accusom'd all their Lives to the pompous Worship and secret *Mysteries* of Deities without Number. The *Christians* on the other hand were careful to remove all Obstacles lying in the way of the *Gentiles*. They thought the most effectual way of gaining them over to their side was by compounding the Matter, which led them to unwarranta-

rantable Compliances, till at length Ch. 6. they likewise set up for *Mysteries*. Yet not having the least Precedent for any Ceremonies from the *Gospel*, excepting *Baptism* and the *Supper*, they strangely disguis'd and transform'd these by adding to them the Pagan *Mystick Rites*. They administr'd them with the strictest Secrecy; and, to be inferiour to their Aversaries in no Circumstance, they permitted none to assist at them, but such as were antecedently prepar'd or *initiated*. And to inspire their *Catechumens* with most ardent Desires of Participation, they gave out that what was so industriously hid were * *tremendous* and *unutterable Mysteries*.

80. Thus lost *Simplicity*, the noblest Ornament of the Truth, should expose it to the Contempt of Unbelievers, *Christianity* was put upon an equal Level with the *Mysteries* of *Ceres*, or the *Orgies* of *Bacchus*. Foolish and mistaken Care! as if the most impious Superstitions could be sanctifi'd by the Name of *Christ*. But *such is always the Fruit of* prudential and condescending

Terms

* *Φερτά, ἀπόρρητα μυστήρια*

Sect. 3. *Terms of Conversion in RELIGION, whereby the Number and not the Sincerity of Professors is mainly intended.*

81. When once the *Philosophers* thought it their Interest to turn *Christians*, Matters grew every Day worse and worse: for they not only retain'd the Air, the Genius, and sometimes the Garb of their several Sects, but most of their erroneous Opinions too. And while they pretended to imploy their *Philosophy* in Defence of *Christianity*, they so confounded them together, that what before was plain to every one, did now become intelligible only to the Learned, who made it still less evident by their litigious Disputes, and vain Subtilties. We must not forget that the *Philosophers* were for making no meaner a Figure among the *Christians* than they did formerly among the *Heathens*; but this was what they could not possibly effect, without rendering every thing abstruse by Terms or otherwise, and so making themselves sole Masters of the Interpretation.

82. These Abuses became almost incurable, when the supreme Magistrate

strate did openly countenance the *Chri-* Ch. 6.
stian Religion. Multitudes then pro-
 fess'd themselves of the Emperor's
 Perswasion, only to make their Court,
 and mend their Fortunes by it, or to pre-
 serve those Places and Preferments where-
 of they were already possess'd. These
 continu'd Pagans in their Hearts; and
 it may be easily imagin'd that they
 carri'd all their old Prejudices
 along with them into a Religion
 which they purely embrac'd out of
 Politick Considerations: And so it
 constantly happens, when the Consci-
 ence is forc'd and not perswaded,
 which was a while after the Case of
 these *Heathens*.

83. The zealous Emperors erected
 stately Churches, and converted the
 Heathen Temples, Sanctuaries, Fanes
 or Chappels, to the Use of *Christians*,
 after a previous Expiation, and pla-
 cing the Sign of the *Cross* in them to
 assure their Possession to *Christ*. All
 their Endowments, with the Benefices
 of the *Priests*, *Flamens*, *Augurs*, and
 the whole sacred Tribe, were appro-
 priated to the *Christian Clergy*. Nay,
 their

Sect. 3. their very Habits, as * *white Linen Stoles, Mitres, and the like*, were retain'd to bring those, as was pretended, to an imperceptible Change, who could not be reconcil'd to the *Christian Simplicity and Poverty*. But indeed the Design at bottom was to introduce the Riches, Pomp, and Dignities of the *Clergy* which immediately succeeded.

84. Things being in this Condition, and the Rites of *Baptism* and the *Supper* being very sensibly augmented, it will not be amiss before I pass further to lay down a short Parallel of the antient Heathen and new-com'd *Christian Mysteries*. And I shall endeavour so to do it, as to make it evident they

* Non discolor ulli
Ante aras, cultus; velantur corpora lino.
Et Pelusiaco præfulget flamine vertex. *Sil. Ital.*
lib. 3. v. 23.

Alba decet Cererem vestis; Cerealibus albam
Sumite. *Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 619.*
Color autem Albus præcipue decorus Deo est, tum
in cæteris, tum maxime in Textili. *Cic. l. 2. de Lig.*
cap. 18.

Ἐδὲς ὁ ἀντίστοιχόν πᾶσι λευκή, καὶ πᾶσι ἐπὶ τῇ κα-
ρὰν ἔχουσιν. *Lucian. de Dez Syria Sacerdotibus.*
Lingere fugiunt Calvi, sistratq; Turba. *Martial.*
l. 12. Ep. 25.

Christianity not Mysteries?

157

they were one in Nature, however Ch. 6.
different in their Subjects.

85. *First*, Their Terms were exactly the same without any Alteration: They both made use of the words *initiating* and *perfecting*. They both call'd their MYSTERIES *Myseis*, *Teleioseis*, *Teleiotika*, *Epopteiai*, &c. They both look'd upon *Initiation* as a kind of *deifying*. And they both stil'd their Priests *Mystagogue*, *Mystes*, *Hieroteles*, &c.

Μυσταγωγοί,
Τηλεϊοῦντες.
Μυσταγωγοί,
Τηλεϊοῦντες.
Τηλεϊοῦντες.
Εποπτεῖαι.
Θείωσις.
Τηλεϊοῦντες.

86. *Secondly*, The Preparatives to their Initiations were the same. The *Gentiles* us'd several * Washings and *Lustrations*; they † fasted, and || ab-

Καθαρισμοὶ

stain'd

* Sacerdos stipatum me religiosa cohorte deducit ad proximas balneas, & prius suero lavacro traditur, præfatus Deum veniam, purissimè circumrorans abluir. *Apul.*

Hæc sanctè ut poscas, Tiberino in gurgite mergis
Manè caput bis terque, & noctem Flumine purgas.

Perf. Sat. 2. v. 15.

Ter caput irrorat, ter tollit in æthera palmas.

Ovid. Fast. l. 4. v. 315.

† Τὸ σύνθημα Ἐλευσινίων μυστικῶν Ἐνέφευται.
ἔπον ἡ κυκλῶνα, &c. *Clem. Alex. pag. 13. Arnob. lib. 5.*

|| Vos quoque abesse procul jubeo, discedite ab aris,
Quis tulit hesternæ gaudia nocte Venus. *Tibul. l. 2.*

Eleg. 1. v. 11.

Castæ placent superis, pura cum veste venite,
Et manibus pueris sumite fontis aquam. *Tibul.*

ibid. v. 13.

Sect. 3. stain'd from Women before *Initiation*; tho the wiser sort did laugh at those who thought such Actions could *expiate Sin, or appease Heaven. But the *Fathers*, the admir'd *Fathers*, imitated them in all these things; and this was the Origin of Abstinence from certain kinds of Meat, of your mock Anniversary Fasts, and the Clerical Celibacy.

87. *Thirdly*, The *Christians* kept their *Mysteries* as secret as the *Heathens* did theirs. † *Chrysostom* says, *We shut the Doors when we celebrate our Mysteries, and exclude the uninitiated.* || *Basil of Cesarea* assures us, *that the Esteem of Mysteries is preserv'd only by Silence.* And (*) *Synesius* says, *that the Gentile Mysteries were perform'd by Night, because their Veneration proceeds from Mens Ignorance about them.* But why

* Omne nefas, omnemque mali purgamina causam
Credebant nostri tollere posse senes.

Ovid. Fast. l. 2. v. 35.

Alh nimium faciles qui tristia crimina cædis,

Fluminea tolli posse putatis aqua! *Idem ib. v. 45.*

† Μυστήρια τὰς θυερας κλείσαντες ἐπιτελῶμεν, καὶ τὰς ἀμύητους ἐξέρχμεν. *Homil. in Matth.*

|| Μυστήριον τὰ σέμνα πάντα διαπύσειν.

(*) Ἀγνοσία σέμνότης ἐστὶν τελετῶν, καὶ νύξ διὰ τὸ τὴν ἀπιστίαν τὰ μυστήρια. *De providen. Sect. 2.*

why should that deserve Blame in o- Ch. 6.
thers, good *Synesius*, which you allow
in your own Party? or is it that the
Christians have a better Right to *Myste-*
ries than the *Gentiles*?

88. *Fourthly*, The *Fathers* were ex-
tremely cautious not to speak intelli-
gibly of their *Mysteries* before Unbe-
lievers, or the *Catechumens*; whence
you frequently meet in their Writings
with these or the like Expressions,
* *The Initiated know, the Initiated un-*
derstand what I say. And as the *Hea-*
thens did by Proclamation † drive a-
way all the *Profane* from their *Myste-*
ries, so the *Deacons* of the *Primitive*
Church cri'd aloud before the Celebra-
tion of *Baptism*, but chiefly of the
Supper, || *Go out all you Catechumens,*
walk out all that are not initiated, or
something to this Effect, for they often
vari'd the Form. *Cyril of Jerusalem*
has a very singular Passage to our pur-
pose,

* *Norunt initiati.* *August.* in locis pluribus. * *Ἰσασιν*
τοὶ μαματισμένοι τὸ λεγόμενον. *Chrysostom.* in *Genes.*
in *Homil.* 27. & alibi passim.

† *Θύεας ἐπιτεθεὶς βεβήλους.* *Orpheus,* *Lucia-*
nus, &c.

|| *Ὅσοι κατηχούμενοι περιέλδιτε, ἔξω πειπατέτε*
ἔσοι ἀμώτοι.

Sect. 3. pose, * Now when catechising is rehears'd, if a Catechumen should ask you what the Teachers said, tell it by no means to any that is not initiated: for we entrust you with a Mystery, and the hope of the Life to come. Keep this Mystery then to him that rewardeth: and if any should say unto you, What harm is it, if I also learn? Answer him, that so sick Persons desire Wine: But if it be given to any unseasonably, it makes him frantick, and so two Evils happen; both the sick Man is destroy'd, and the Physician is disparag'd. Thus if a Catechumen
hears

* "Οτε πίνον κατήχησις λέγεται, εἰν σὲ κατηχόμενος ἐξετάσῃ τὴ ἐρήνυσιν οἱ διδασκοντες, μηδὲν λέγειν τῷ ἕξῳ. Μυστήριον γάρ σοι παραδίδωμεν, καὶ ἐλπίδα μελλόντος αἰῶνος. Τήρησον τὸ μυστήριον τῷ μετὰ ποδοῦ τῇ μὴ ποτὲ σοι πὶς εἴπῃ, τί βλαπτή, εἰν καὶ γὰρ μάθῃ; Καὶ οἱ νοσῶντες τὸν δίνον ζητοῦσιν. Ἀλλὰ εἰν ἀκρίτως δοδῇ φρενίτην ἐργάζεται, καὶ δύο κακά γίνεται, καὶ ὁ νοσῶν ἀπόλλυται, καὶ ὁ ἰατρὸς διαβάλλεται. Οὕτως ὁ κατηχόμενος, εἰν ἀκούσῃ παρὰ πνευ, καὶ ὁ κατηχόμενος φρενιπα. ἐκ διδῆ γὰρ πὶ πικρὸς, καὶ ἐλέγχῃ τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ ἐμυκτηρίζῃ τὸ λεγόμενον; καὶ ὁ πνεὺς ὡς προσδότης κατακρίνεται. ἥδη δὲ σὺ μεθορίῳ σήκῃς, βλέπῃ μοι μὴ ἐπαλαίσης, ἔχ' ὅπ' ἐκ ἀξία λαλιάς τὰ λεγόμενα, ἀλλὰ ὅπ' ἡ ἀκούη ἀναξία τῷ διέξασθαι ἥς ποτὲ καὶ σὺ κατηχόμενος, οὐ διηγοσάμην σοι τὰ προκείμενα. ἔταν τὴ πέρα λαλῆς τὸ ὕψωμα τοῦ διδασκομένου, τότε αὖ γνώσῃ ὅπ' ἀνάξιοι οἱ κατηχόμενοι τῆς Ἀκοῆς. Cyril. Hierosol. præfat. in Catech. cl. Ed. t. Paris. 1631.

hears those things from any of the Faith-
ful; he grows likewise frantick; for not
understanding what he heard, he argues
against the thing, and laughs at what is
said: so the Believer that told it him is
condemn'd as a Betrayer of Secrets. Now
you being one of us, see that you blab out
nothing: not that what we say are not
worthy to be spoken, but that others are
not worthy to hear them. When you
were a Catechumen your self, we never
told you what was propos'd. But when
you have learnt by experience the Subli-
mity of those things which are taught,
you will then be convinc'd that the Cate-
chumens are unworthy to hear them.

89. Fifthly, The Steps and Degrees
in both their Initiations are the same.
The Heathens had * five Degrees ne-
cessary to Perfection. First, common
Purgation; Secondly, more private
Purgation; Thirdly, a liberty of stand-
ing amongst the Initiated; Fourthly,
Initiation; and, Lastly, the Right of
seeing every thing, or being Epopts.

M

Among

* Εν τοῖς ἱερεῖς ἠγῶντο μὲν αἱ πανδήμοι καθαρμοί,
εἰτα δὴ ταύταις αἱ ἀπορρητότεραι, μετὰ ταύτας συ-
στάσεις, καὶ δὴ ταύταις μυσταῖς, ἐν τέλει δ' ἐποπτείας.
Olympiodor.

Sect. 3. Among the *Christians* likewise there were five Steps by which their Penitents were re-admitted to Communion. First they were oblig'd to remain some Years separate from the Congregation lamenting their Sins, whence this Step was call'd *Proclausis*. Secondly, they were remov'd nearer the People, where during three Years they might hear the Priests, tho not see them: this Step was therefore call'd *Acroasis*. Thirdly, for three Years more they might hear and see, but not mix with the Congregation: this Period was call'd *Hypoptosis*. Fourthly, they might stand with the People, but not receive the Sacraments: this was their *Systasis*. And, Fifthly, they were admitted to Communion, which was call'd *Methexis*. The new Converts likewise, under Preparation to participate of the Mysteries, were stil'd *Catechumens*; then *competent*; and, lastly, *Epopts*, *perfect*, or *Believers*: which are the very Degrees in Name and Quality, to which *Pythagoras* oblig'd his Disciples.

90. I could draw out this Parallel much larger, but here's enough to shew
how

how Christianity became mysterious, and Ch. 6.
how so divine an Institution did, through the Craft and Ambition of *Priests and Philosophers*, degenerate into meer *Paganism*.

91. *Mystery* prevail'd very little in the first Hundred or Century of Years after *Christ*; but in the second and third, it began to establish it self by *Ceremonies*. To *Baptism* were then added the tasting of Milk and * Honey, † Anointing, the Sign of the Cross, a white Garment, &c. There was quickly after a farther Accession of Questions and Answers, of antecedent Fastings and Watchings, Kissing, and set times of Administration. After *Baptism* they did not || wash for a whole Week, exactly answerable to the Superstition of the Gentiles, who

M 2 never

* Denique ut a Baptismate ingrediar, aquam adi-turi ibidem, sed & aliquanto prius in ecclesia sub Antistitis manu, contestamur nos renunciare Diabolo, & pompæ, & angelis ejus. Dehinc ter mergimur, amplius aliquid respondentes quam Dominus in Evangelio determinavit. Inde suscepti lactis & mellis concordiam prægustamus; ex eaque die Lavacro quotidiano per totam Hebdomadem abstinemus. *Tertallian*. pag. 102.

† Egressi de Lavacro perungimur benedicta Unctione, &c. *Id.* pag. 226.

|| Tertul. in loco citato.

Sect. 3. never put off the * Garment in which they were *initiated* till it fell all to tatters. Next were added Injection of Salt and Wine into the Mouths of the Baptiz'd, and a second Unction, with Imposition of Hands. But in later times there was no end of Lights, Exorcisms, Exufflations, and many other Extravagancies of Jewish, or Heathen Original. From this Source sprang not only the Belief of *Omens*, *Presages*, *Apparitions*, † the Custom of *Burying* with three shovel-fulls of Earth, with other vulgar Observations among Christians; but also *Lights*, *Feasts* or *Holy-days*, *Consecrations*, *Images*, worshipping towards the || *East*, *Altars*,

* Ὁ δὲ μυστήριον τὸ ἱερόν, ὃ ἐφόρει ἐν τῇ μυστικῇ ἐσθλότητι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος ἀνὰ τὴν ἀφάνισιν ἀφαιρῶν. Scholiast. in Plut. Aristophan.

† Priusquam in eos [scil. mortuos] injecta Gleba est, Locus ille, ubi crematum est corpus, nihil habet Religionis: Anglicè, *Before this Ceremony, 'tis not Hallowed Ground.* Cic. l. 2. de Leg. cap. 22.

Archytas naufragus, prætereuntem exorans ne se insepultum relinquat, sic preces absolvit apud Horatium:

Quamquam festinas, non est mora longa: licebit,
Injecto TER pulvere, curras. *Lib. 1. Od. 28. v. 35.*

|| His Dea placanda est, hæc tu conversus ad ortum
Dic quater; & vivo perluc rore manus. *Ovid.*

Fast. l. 4. v. 777. Ὁ δὲ Νηὺς ὄρεται μὲν ἐς ἡλίου ἀνίσταται. Lucian. pag. 674. Edit. Amst. 1687.


tars, Musick, Dedications of Churches, Ch. 6.
and in them distinct Places for the LAITY, (as they speak) and the CLERGY: for there is nothing like these in the Writings of the Apostles, but they are all plainly contain'd in the Books of the Gentiles, and was the Substance of their Worship.

92. All the Rites of the *Supper*, too tedious to particularize, were introduc'd by degrees after the same manner. So by endeavouring to make the plainest things in the World appear *mysterious*, their very Nature and Use were absolutely perverted and destroy'd, and are not yet fully restor'd by the purest Reformation in *Christendom*. But we must not forget how *Tertullian* himself has acknowledg'd that for their frequent *Crossings* and other *Baptismal* Rites, for their scrupling to let any of the *Bread and Wine* fall to the Ground, or to receive them from any hand but the *Priests*, with the like Ceremonies, they had no colour of † Au-

M 3

tho-

* Harum & aliarum ejusmodi Disciplinaryum, si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies; Traditio tibi prætenditur auctrix, Consuetudo confirmatrix, & Fides observatrix. Pag. 102.

Sect. 3. thority from the *Scriptures*, but only from *Custom* and *Tradition*.

93. Now their own Advantage being the Motive that put the Primitive *Clergy* upon reviving *Mystery*, they quickly erected themselves by its Assistance into a separate and politick Body, tho not so soon into their various Orders and Degrees. For in the two first Centuries we meet with no *Sub-Deacons*, *Readers*, or the like; much less with the Names or Dignities of *Popes*, *Cardinals*, *Patriarchs*, *Metropolitans*, *Archbishops*, *Primates*, *Suffragans*, *Archdeacons*, *Deans*, *Chancellors*, *Vicars*; or their numerous Dependants and Retinue. But in small time *Mystery* made way for those, and several other Usurpations upon Mankind, under pretence of *Labourers in the Lord's Vineyard*.

94. The Degrees or Constitutions concerning *Ceremonies* and *Discipline*, to encrease the Splendor of this new State; did strangely affect, stupify, and amaze the Minds of the ignorant People; and made them believe they were in good earnest Mediators between God and Men, that could fix Sanc-

Sanctity to certain Times, Places, Persons, or Actions. They seem'd almost a different and more divine Species of Creatures, distinguishing themselves from other Men in their *Garb*, in their manner of living by *Tithes* and *Donations*, in their *separate Places* at Church, and several other ways. By this means the *Clergy* were able to do any thing; they engross'd at length the sole Right of interpreting *Scripture*, and with it claim'd *Infallibility*, to their Body.

95. This is the true Origin and Progress of the *Christian Mysteries*; and we may observe how great a share of their Establishment is owing to *Ceremonies*. These never fail to take off the Mind from the Substance of *Religion*, and lead Men into dangerous Mistakes: for *Ceremonies* being easily observ'd, every one thinks himself religious enough that exactly performs them. But there is nothing so naturally opposite as CEREMONY and CHRISTIANITY. The latter discovers Religion naked to all the World, and the former delivers it under mystical Representations of a meerly arbitrary Signification.

Sect. 3. 96. It is visible then that *Ceremonies* perplex instead of explaining; but supposing they made things easier, then that would be the best Religion which had most of them, for they are generally, and may all be made, equally significative. A Candle put into the Hands of the *Baptiz'd*, to denote the Light of the Gospel, is every whit as good a *Ceremony* as to make the Sign of the Cross upon their Fore-heads, in token of owning Christ for their Master and Saviour. Wine, Milk, and Honey signify spiritual Nourishment, Strength, and Gladness, as well as standing at the *Gospel* betokens our Readiness to hear or profess it.

97. In short, there's no degree of *Enthusiasm* higher than placing Religion in such Fooleries; nor any thing so base as by these fraudulent Arts to make the *Gospel* of no effect, unless as far as it serves a Party. But I shall have a better Occasion of exhausting the Subject of *Ceremonies* elsewhere. I treat of 'em here only as they made up the *Gentile Mysteries*, and were afterwards brought in to constitute those of the *Christians*. But as the
vast

vast multitudes of the latter quickly render'd all secret Rites almost impossible, so to preserve the *Mystery*, things were purposely made downright unintelligible, or very perplex'd. In this Point our pretended *Christians* outdid all the *Mysteries* of the *Heathens*; for the Honour of these might be destroy'd by Discovery, or the babbling Tongue of any initiated Person: But the new *Mysteries* were thus securely plac'd above the Reach of all Sense and Reason. Nay, so jealous were the **CLERGY** of their own Order, lest any of 'em should irreligiously unfold those sublime *Mysteries* to the profanely inquisitive **LAITY**, that they thought fit to put it as much out of the Power of the Holy Tribe it self, as out of ours, to understand them; and so it continues, in a great measure, to this day.

The

The CONCLUSION.

THUS I have endeavour'd to shew others, what I'm fully convinc'd of my self, that there is no *MYSTERY* in *CHRISTIANITY*, or the most perfect *Religion*; and that by Consequence nothing *contradictory* or *inconceivable*, however made an *Article of Faith*, can be contain'd in the *Gospel*, if it be really the Word of God: for I have hitherto argu'd only upon this Supposition, for the Reasons to be seen towards the end of the Preface.

Notwithstanding all Pretences that may be made to the contrary, it is evident that no particular *Instances* or *Doctrines* of any sort can serve for a proper Answer to this *COURSE*; for, as long as the Reasons of it hold good, whatever *Instance* can be alledg'd must either be found not *mysterious*, or, if it prove a
MY-

MYSTERY, not divinely reveal'd. There is no middle way, that I can see. When those Passages of *Scripture* I have cited for my Assertion, are either reconcil'd to such as any would bring against me, or prov'd not to be understood by me; when my Arguments against all *inconceivable Mysteries*, and the Absurdity of God's *revealing* any such *Mysteries*, are confuted, 'tis time enough then for others to produce *Examples*, or for me to consider 'em. And tho by convincing People that *all the Parts of their RELIGION must not only be in themselves, but to them also must appear, sound and intelligible*, I might justly leave every one to discover to himself the Reasonableness or Unreasonableness of his Religion (which is no difficult Business, when once Men are perswaded that they have a right to do it;) yet the Duties I owe GOD and the World oblige me to proceed further according as I enjoy Health or Leisure, without limiting my self as to any time, that being a thing in no Man's Power to command at his Pleasure.

My

My next Task therefore is (God Willing) to prove the Doctrines of the *New Testament* perspicuous, possible, and most worthy of God, as well as all calculated for the highest Benefits of Man. Some will not thank me, it's probable, for so useful an Undertaking; and others will make me a *Heretick* in grain for what I have perform'd already. But as it is Duty, and no Body's Applause, which is the Rule of my Actions; so, God knows, I no more value this cheap and ridiculous Nick-name of a *Heretick* than *Paul* did before me: for I acknowledg no *ORTHODOXY* but the *TRUTH*; and, I'm sure, where-ever the *TRUTH* is, there must be also the *CHURCH*, of God I mean, and not any Human Faction or Policy. Besides, the Imputation of *Heterodoxy* being now as liberal upon the slightest Occasions, out of Ignorance, Passion, or Malice, as in the Days of *Ireneus* and *Epiphanius*, it is many times instead of a Reproach the greatest Honour imaginable.

Some

Some good Men may be apt to say, that, supposing my Opinion never so true, it may notwithstanding occasion much harm ; because when People find themselves impos'd upon in any part of *Religion*, they are ready to call the whole in question. This Offence is plainly taken, not given ; and my Design is nothing the less good, if ill-dispos'd Persons abuse it, as they frequently do *Learning*, *Reason*, *Scripture*, and the best things in the World. But it is visible to every one that they are the *Contradictions* and *Mysteries* unjustly charg'd upon *Religion*, which occasion so many to become *Deists* and *Atheists*. And it should be consider'd likewise that when any, not acquainted with it, are dazl'd by the sudden Splendor of the *Truth*, their Number is not comparable to theirs who see clearly by its Light. Because several turn'd *Libertines* and *Atheists* when *PRIEST-CRAFT* was laid so open at the *Reformation*, were *Luther*, *Calvin*, or *Zwinglius* to be blam'd for it ? or which should weigh most with them, these few prejudic'd *Scepticks*,

ticks, or those thousands they converted from the Superstitions of *Rome*? I'm therefore for giving no Quarter to *ERROR* under any pretence; and will be sure, where-ever I have Ability or Opportunity, to expose it in its true Colours, without rendring my Labour ineffectual, by weakly mincing or softening of any thing.

FINIS.
